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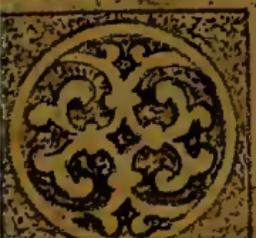
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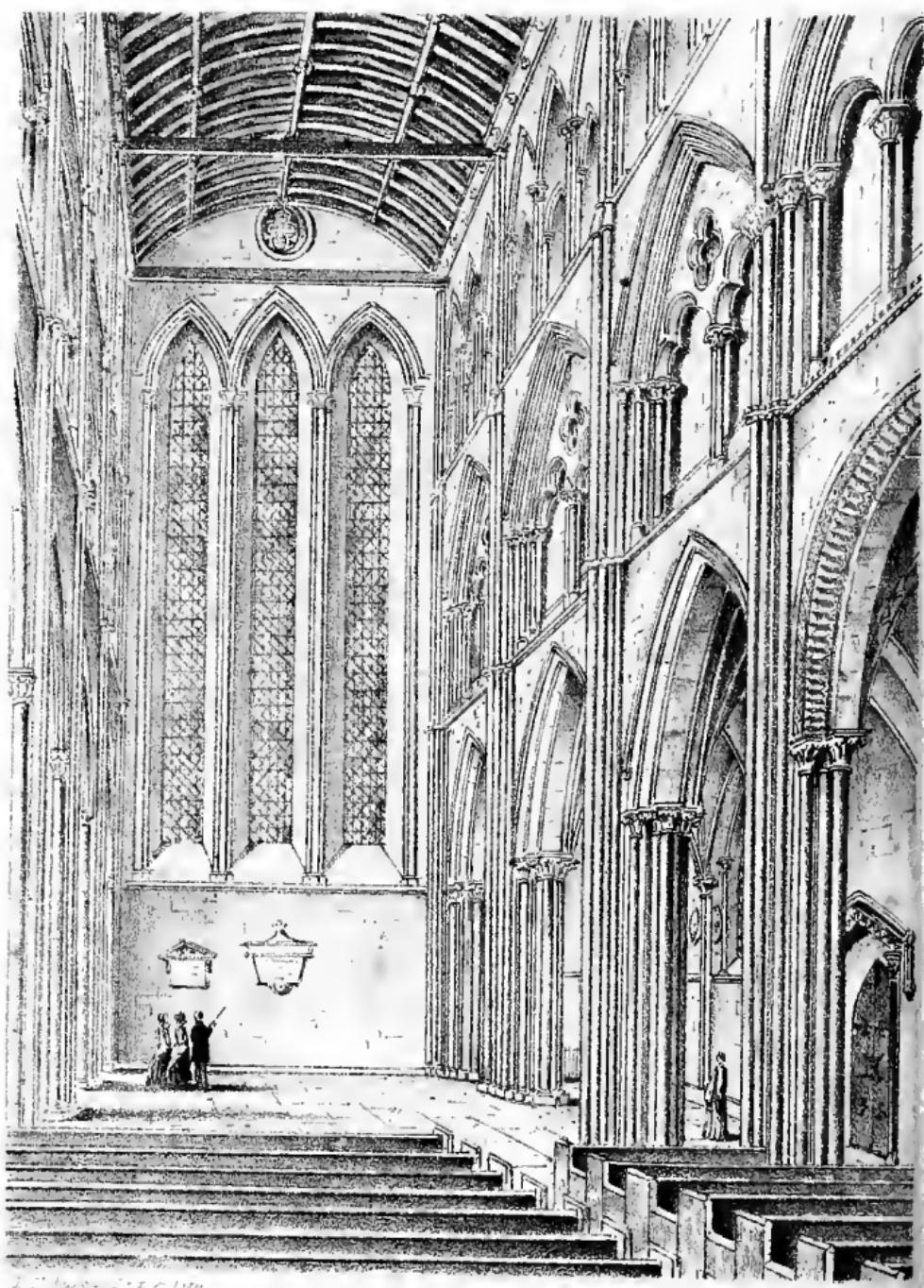
Abbey Church

ROMSEY

by
C Spence



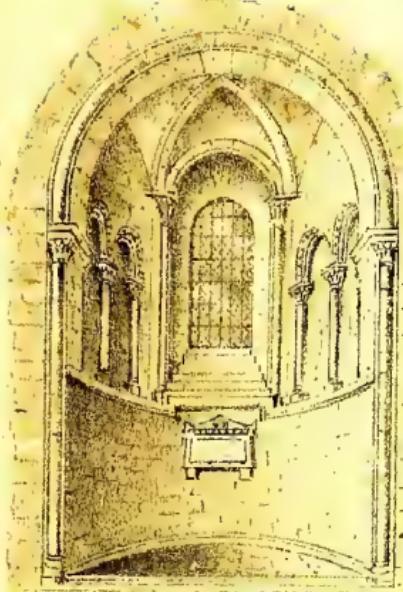




NORTH WEST VIEW OF NAVE, ROMSEY ABBEY CHURCH



INTERSECTED ARCH NORTH TRANSEPT.



APSE IN SOUTH AISLE



NAVE AISLE NORTH.

TO

THE REV. WM. CARUS, M.A.,

VICAR OF ROMSEY,

THIS ATTEMPT TO DESCRIBE THE VENERABLE BUILDING
COMMITTED TO HIS CARE, IS, WITH PERMISSION,
MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED, BY HIS

VERY OBEDIENT SERVANT,

CHARLES SPENCE.

DEVONPORT,

JUNE, 1851.

PREFACE.

“ And when he came to Saynte Marie’s aisle,
Where nonnes were wont to praie,
The vespers were songe, the shryne was gone,
And the nonnes had passyd awaie!”

Sy a *Æginus de Fera.*

IN the present age, when research and inquiry into the habits, customs, and buildings of past times have engrossed the attention of the learned, and formed the theme of many a poet’s inspirations, he is bold indeed who ventures to discuss so difficult a subject as the history of the magnificent edifice attempted to be described in this little work: but as the author, when an inhabitant of Romisey, long cherished a desire to investigate such manuscripts, books, etc. as might tend to remove the veil of obscurity which had fallen over the origin of the

sacred walls of its Abbey Church—an inclination which subsequent opportunities have enabled him to gratify—he is unwilling to lock up, as it were, what little information he may have acquired respecting it; and ventures to submit, for public consideration, the result of his researches amid the leaves of many a time-worn tome and mouldering monument of monastic industry.

And now, possibly, he will be asked in language similar to that addressed to Philippus, Pompey's boatman,

Tις ὡν, ὁ ἀνθρωπε, οὗ πλειν διανοῆ Μαγνον Πομπεον;

“ And who art thou that thinkest thyself competent and fitted to rescue from neglect and oblivion so fine an instance of ancient art, and give to the world a memorial of its former greatness?” To which the author would reply, that in all humility is his little book written;—that it seeks no higher

fame than to be considered a pleasing companion and guide to those who visit the sacred subject of its pages—an edifice in which, perchance, the death-mass for the soul of Rufus may have been sung, while his pierced body was being carried past its walls; and which, from its proximity to Winchester and its celebrity as a house of female education, must often have contained within its precincts the royal and noble of England. This inquiry might well employ an abler pen; but, in the absence of better chronicles, the present sketch, it is hoped, may not be deemed altogether unacceptable. A general history of the Town and Abbey, or a treatise on the Order of the Benedictines (who possessed not only this, but most of the rich abbeys in England as well as all the cathedral priories, with the exception of Carlisle), is not attempted; for independently of the circumseribed limits of this work affording no space for the

necessary amplification, the domestic history of Romsey, like that of most other abbies, is meagre in the extreme. Indeed, religious houses previously to the Reformation, appear to have held one monotonous and undisturbed course: it is true their dissolution made them the subjects of temporary interest, but it was as the *flashing* of the meteor, which bursts and is seen no more.

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AN ESSAY
ON THE
ABBEEY CHURCH OF ROMSEY,
IN HAMPSHIRE.

CHAPTER I.

ROMSEY—ITS SITUATION, ANTIQUITY, AND ETYMOLOGY.

ROMSEY, distant from Southampton about seven miles, is a town of such rare antiquity that its origin has been completely lost in the obscurity of ages. Many authors have been of opinion that it rose with its justly-celebrated Abbey, in the time of the Saxons; while others, with equal if not stronger claims on our attention, assert it to have existed during the Roman dominion in this island. The latter hypothesis is insisted on by Dr. Stukely. He says, “ Romsey was unquestionably a Roman town, as its present name shews:” it is classed by him as a *city*, under the name “ *Arminis*;” and he

observes, that Roman coins have been discovered there. In order, however, that the reader may be enabled to draw his own conclusions on this subject, we will proceed to consider its probable etymology. In the Saxon Chronicle it is denominated *Rumeſ-ege*, which signifies a spacious island; and it is to be observed, that the same venerable work retains that form at two very distinct periods of time:—thus A. D. 971, *Hep ƿorðende Eadmund Ȑƿeling ȝ hīſ hīc lið æt Rumeſ-ege: Hoc anno decessit Eadmundus Clito, et ejus corpus jacet apud Rumesige;* and again in 1085, when speaking of Christina, cousin of Edward the Confessor, *Beah into mýnſtƿe to Rumeſ-ege: Cessit in monasterium apud Romesige:* in both quotations we find the Saxon adjective “Rumeſ” unaltered. It may, perhaps, be pertinent to state, that the ancient town and abbey of Romsey undoubtedly stood upon an island, one side of which is still washed by the beautiful river Test, whilst the other is bounded by portions of that stream, now arched over, running through Church-street, etc. When we consider how large and fair an island must have been so formed, the supposition of our Saxon ancestors

having thus denominated it, is at least deserving of our consideration. But, on the other hand, Dr. Stukely is supported by the learned Baxter, who is of opinion that it should rather be *Romeſ-eȝ*, or Roman Island; and in Doomsday Book the abbey is distinctly described as the *Abbey de Romesyg*, which curious circumstance proves that the same difference existed at the time of the Conquest which is prevalent in the present day—many persons adopting the name *Romsey*, while others as scrupulously both spell and pronounce it *Rumsey*. But as the assertion of the Roman origin of the town is easily made, let us see how far probability bears out its correctness. When we regard the situation of Romsey, we find that it is nearly equidistant from Sorbiodunum,¹ Brige,² Venta Belgarum,³ and Clausentum.⁴ These were stations of acknowledged importance, between which much intercourse must have been maintained; and as it would have been next to an impossibility for the Roman legions, in their march between Clausentum and either of the two first-mentioned stations, to have avoided the site of this town, and no small slur upon their

¹ Old Sarum. ² Broughton. ³ Winchester. ⁴ Near Southampton.

known good taste, to imagine that they would neglect so splendid and beautiful a valley, there are strong grounds for concluding that it derives its name from the Roman-Saxonic compound, and that *Romer-ey*, *Romana Insula*, superseded its more ancient and supposed appellation of *Arminis*.¹

¹ The fact of the Roman occupation of this neighbourhood was completely established in the Spring of 1845, when a considerable number of Roman Coins in small brass were found at Abbotswood, on the farm of Mr. Clark, of Timsbury, near Romsey.—Vide Journal of British Archaeological Association, vol. 1, p. 257.

CHAPTER II.

FOUNDATION OF THE ABBEY BY KING EDWARD THE ELDER, AND SUBSEQUENT ENLARGEMENT BY KING EDGAR.

WITH regard to the stately Abbey Church, it is a matter of deep regret that no known documents are extant, enabling us to ascertain the precise period of the erection and general history of this venerable building, which affords an invaluable specimen of the architecture of the early ages, and lays open to the antiquary a wide field for conjecture and research. According to the best information, this church was founded by the son of the immortal Alfred, Edward the Elder, who succeeded his father, A. D. 900, and reigned twenty-five years; though Capgrave, who was a monk of Bury, in his life of St. Elfleda, as will be seen hereafter, attributes its foundation to Ethelwold, one of his thanes. Leland, in his *Collectanea de Rebus Britannicis*, expressly says, “Ecclesia de Romesey ab Edwardo seniore fundata est;” and Roger Hoveden, (fol.

244, 6.) also says, “*Anno Dcccvi. Rex Ang. Edgarus, in monasterio Rumesiae quod avus suus construxerat, sanctimoniales collocavit, sanctamque Merwennam super eas abbatissam constituit.*” This institution was, in all probability, small and poorly endowed; for Edward, who made the surrounding neighbourhood the seat of civil war between himself and his brother Ethelward, and whose reign moreover was anything but peaceful, can hardly be supposed to have had leisure sufficient to allow him to bestow that attention on a religious foundation, which was requisite to fulfil the purposes of a pious votary of those days. There is no further mention of this abbey until the year 967, when Edgar, having secured peace to himself and inflicted terror on the Danes by the powerful armaments which he maintained, turned his attention to the ecclesiastical establishments of his kingdom, and, in conjunction with Dunstan, effected a complete reform. The state of the church at this period, offers curious matter for consideration. William of Malmsbury, who was a monk, says, the condition of the Church of England in those times may be judged from the words of king Edgar, in

his charter to the abbey of Malmsbury, which were to this effect:—" All the monasteries in my realm, to the outward sight, are nothing but worm-eaten and rotten lumber and boards; and that worse is, they are almost empty and devoid of divine service." The monasteries had been dissolved in the reign of Alfred; and although some few religious houses were still inhabited by monks, yet the secular clergy, who were not bound by any monastic rule, appear to have held powerful sway. Dunstan, their inveterate opposer, was, doubtless, an accomplished man and a scholar, " taking great delighte in musicke, paynting, and engraving." He was nephew to Athelm, archbishop of Canterbury, and was born A. D. 925: king Edmund made him abbot of Glastonbury. He maintained his influence throughout the reign of Edred, but fell into disgrace with Edwy, in consequence of his hatred to the secular clergy, and was banished. Having successfully plotted with Edgar against Edwy, he first obtained for the former a participation in the kingly power, and, eventually, the whole government. Of course, Edgar soon recalled the lordly prelate, who, having become archbishop of Canterbury,

found his credit so firmly re-established that he resumed those machinations in favor of the monks, which the displeasure of Edwy had compelled him to renounce. The ejection of the secular clergy, however, was by no means an easy task to accomplish: they were considered by the nobility and great men of the nation to be the lawful and ancient guardians of the church; and it was considered highly impolitic to encourage bequests of estates, etc. to institutions whose members were, by their rule, excluded from pastoral functions, so that they might be wholly employed within the limits of their monasteries. But there was one circumstance which contributed not a little to the success of Dunstan's machinations, which was, the imputed objectionable mode of living adopted by the secular clergy: we read, but in *monkish* authors, that “they were very ill livers; that pride, avarice, gluttony, drunkenness, and luxury openly reigned among them.” Such irregularities, whether real or imaginary, were made the most of by their enemies; and at length wrought so strongly upon the people and the king, that, at the instance of Dunstan, Edgar, in a speech made before a council assembled

for the purpose, declaimed against these clerical delinquencies, and appointed the archbishop of Canterbury, Ethelwold bishop of Winchester, and Oswald bishop of Worcester, to take upon themselves the management of this ecclesiastical revolution.

The consequence of this commission being the complete overthrow of the secular clergy and permanent establishment of the monkish orders, we may reasonably infer that during the investigation, the nunnery of Romsey came under consideration of the commissioners; and that Edgar, in conjunction with them, or more probably with Ethelwold, the bishop of Winchester, in whose diocese the nunnery was situate, remodelled the institution of Edward the Elder, and formed an establishment for nuns of the Benedictine order.* Stowe, in his annals, makes no mention of the prior foundation of Edward, but attributes the erection of this abbey to Alwinus, earl of East Anglia and kinsman to Edgar; this, however, is refuted by Roger de Hoveden, as previously quoted, though the latter

* In the Chronicle of Peter de Langtoft, a canon regular of the order of St. Austin, at the priory of the Black Canons at Bridlington, who died about the commencement of the reign of Edward the second, the nunnery of Romsey is stated to have been richly

appears to be wrong in the date. According to Stowe, the church was solemnly confirmed by king Edgar, " in the presence of all the nobilitie, on Christmas day in the year of our Lord God nine hundred, seaventy and foure."

endowed—the number of its nuns amounting to one hundred. Speaking of Edgar, he says,

" Mikille he wirschiped God, and served our Lady;
The abbey of Rumege he feffed richely,
With rentes full gode and kirkes of pris,
He did ther in of Nunnis a hundreth ladies."

CHAPTER III.

REMARKS ON THE ORIGIN OF SAXON AND NORMAN ARCHITECTURE—ROMSEY ABBEY A SPECIMEN THEREOF—ITS GENERAL ARCHITECTURAL DE- SCRIPTION.

THE determination of the exact period in which any edifice built in the Saxon or Norman styles (as they are termed) may have been erected, is no easy task to perform. We know, in truth, so little of English architecture previously to the Conquest, that this subject has been agreed on all sides to be one of great difficulty to the student. Minute and comparative consideration may, however, lead us to something like a probable result. The experienced reader will easily admit the difficulty of drawing a line of positive distinction between the early Norman and the late *supposed* specimens of Saxon work which are now extant; for, notwithstanding the extreme simplicity of the latter, and the more extended design and adornments of the former, they may, both of them, be traced as originating in

one source—an imitation of that architecture which the Roman brought with him into this country. We find, on comparing a Norman pillar with its classic prototype, that the *bases* of both are remarkably similar to each other; that the *shafts* are of the same general principle; and the *capitals* strongly corroborate the assumption of their relationship,—the elegant decorations of the Italian being imitated, in innumerable instances, by the adaptation of strange and nondescript figures of animals, coarsely-carved leaves, flowers, etc. The Norman architect did not, however, completely follow his model, by the adaptation of the entablature—that beautiful though superfluous addition to the Roman column—but threw his semicircular arch at once and boldly from the simple abacus which crowned the pillar: indeed, it is not improbable that this fine addition may never have been introduced here; for we are not, perhaps, to suppose, that the highest energies of Italy and her arts found kindred footing in a country which, far from inviting her dominion, had put to temporary confusion even the legions of Cæsar. The Roman citizen denominated our conquered progenitors, “*Britanni hospitibus feri,*”

and looked upon them much in the same light as that in which we regard the aborigines of New Zealand, a race of wild and uncultivated barbarians, remote from the extreme bounds of civilization, and separated by a wide and tempestuous sea:—

“ *Belluosus qui remotis
Obstrepit oceanus Britannis.*”

It is not likely, then, that the élite among the Roman architects would be tempted to visit regions which promised no theatre for the display of architectural perfection; neither do we find that there are many fine specimens to be met with in her northern colonies; and to this fact, as well as to the necessarily-limited powers of the architect, may we assign the rise of that debased and altered style of building, which has generally, though erroneously, been considered of Norman origin. Throughout the continent, wherever the Roman eagle has soared, and where early ecclesiastical or warlike edifices remain, may be seen the *same general species of architecture*, varying in detail according to circumstance, but yet forming one general whole. This style may, therefore, be

considered as prevalent in England from the period when the Romans finally left us, A. D. 426 or 427, up to the end of the reign of Henry II., a period of nearly eight centuries, though it probably began to assume its more grand and majestic features at the commencement of the tenth century, which were expanded and improved by the rapid import of talent and design which took place after the accession of William the Conqueror. Of this mode of building the architectural student will very justly consider Romsey church as one of the largest and most interesting monuments in this kingdom, and a magnificent proof of the piety of the earlier ages. But, lest we should be thought to dwell too much on particular points, let us proceed to the consideration of the Abbey generally. Having passed through a narrow street which leads to it, the spectator is struck with admiration and surprise at the gigantic dimensions of the edifice, which breaks at once upon his view. The heavy Norman tower, frowning over the lofty walls of the choir and northern transept, the circular windows with their zigzag mouldings, together with the ponderous appearance of design throughout, inspire feelings

which none but architectural antiquaries can adequately comprehend. The church is cruciform, and remarkable for the insertion of two small chapels or chantries in the upper angles of the cross. The transepts and choir, with the exception of its upper eastern windows, together with a great portion of the nave, are all of pure Norman architecture, of exceeding good character, and showing but few of those alterations which have disfigured other buildings of this kind. The western end affords a fine example of the early English style; and in parts of the building, as will be presently observed, are specimens of yet later date. Commencing our perambulation at the north-eastern part of the church, we observe the two eastern windows, which are immediately over the altar. They are extremely beautiful, and, by their composition, enable us to determine with tolerable accuracy the period of their *insertion*—for inserted they very evidently have been, from the Norman remains about them; which, with the fact of the clerestory, or upper gallery of the church, being blocked up with masonry, proves also the certainty of this eastern portion having been extended to a

greater length than at present: it was, doubtless, of a circular form, and corresponded with the position of the two chantries previously mentioned, which terminate in semicircles in an eastern direction.* But the eastern windows, as before observed, are data in regard to *time*; for we notice a mixture in them which could only have taken place at one particular period, considered by all architects as affording the most delightful and interesting subjects for study—I allude to the transition from the early English to the decorated style, which is remarkably evident in the subject now under consideration; their tracery being of the latter character, whilst all their mouldings and ornaments are decidedly early English, which ceased to be in use after the death of Edward I.; and as the decorated portions are of early workmanship, not possessing the more elegant enrichments which afterwards adorned this beautiful grade of English architecture, we may with confidence affirm these windows to have been inserted about the commencement of the reign of Edward II.

* Since this was written it has been ascertained, by digging, that the chapel extended 60 feet, and terminated in an apse.

The external sides of the choir, north transept, and chapel in the upper angle of the cross, are all Norman: the latter has been used as a parish school-room; and the chantry, which once reverberated with the hymn of the peaceful nun, has also re-echoed the noisy vociferations of mischievous boyhood. It would be well had this been its only desecration; but the hand of the spoiler has been here, and the eye of the spectator is offended by the insertion (within the last fourteen years) of a doorway, utterly destitute of the least harmony or analogy with the beautiful architecture by which it is surrounded. The front of the north transept bears numerous marks of cannon-shot, and the tradition is, that they record an attempt by Cromwell to batter down the church. This is hardly probable: indeed, the round-headed, hard-thumping knaves of Worcester and Naseby knew their business too well to spend time in demolishing stone walls, three feet in thickness, by the application of four-pound shot. It is not unlikely, however, that the mischief was perpetrated by them; for this particular portion of the building may have been considered well adapted as a target for the

practice of their field-pieces, which were seldom of heavier calibre than the weight before-mentioned. In the north wall of the nave almost all the windows have been inserted since the original erection; some of them are of the perpendicular—others in the decorated style; but it is to be observed, that the circular arch of the original windows is still distinctly visible over them; which proves, that the Norman walls of this building remain comparatively uninjured. Towards the western end is a semi-cylindrical ornament resembling a grinding-stone, respecting which an absurd legend has been invented, too contemptible for repetition. The west front of the church is wonderfully fine, and the great window of three lights is, perhaps, not surpassed by any in the kingdom. On the south-western corner of the nave is a doorway, inserted probably just before the commencement of the decorated style, for its many ranges of moulding, its twisted columns with their highly-enriched capitals, together with the sculpture of flowers, animals, etc., all tend to deny its origin in the early English style, and assimilate strongly with the eastern windows over the altar. This doorway

is a fine study, and deserves very minute consideration: near it, on a buttress, and at some height from the ground, is a kind of corbel, resembling an emaciated head, and cut in the stone wall beneath the following singular inscription:

RICARD: GASE: SEMEMASE

What its signification may be, it is now impossible to determine;—whether it has been the freak of some workmen to caricature a brother-laborer, or whether its import was intended to be of greater moment, will, in all probability, never be decided. It is a curious fact, that near the door and within the south aisle of the nave, is a slab, commemorating a person of the name *Gase*, or *Dase*, but evidently much too recent to appertain in any way to the curious sculpture before alluded to. The south side of the nave still retains the original windows, and grooves may be observed in the wall, from which formerly depended the roof of the cloisters, which reached from the west end of the southern transept, and formed a covered communication between the abbey church and the monastic buildings at a short distance from it. Some portions of the latter yet remain, and form a series of dwelling-

houses, in one of which might be traced, until very lately, the plates to which the cloister roof had been attached. In the corner formed by the junction of the southern transept with the nave, is the only *original* remaining doorway belonging to the church. There seems to have been, designedly, very few doors to the ancient building. Whether the original Norman edifice had a great western entrance, cannot now be decided: it probably had not; and great care appears to have been taken, that the means of ingress and egress should neither be many nor particularly convenient. Two doorways only, exclusive of that now about to be considered, one at the western end of the north, and the other similarly situate at the south aisle of the nave, belonged to the edifice prior to the sixteenth century. The first most likely admitted the laity at the celebration of high mass or public festival; and through the other it is probable the sisterhood passed, when they formed those long and solemn processions which the church of Rome well knew how to adorn with all that was imposing and grand. The entrance at the north-eastern corner, and that at the north transept, are evidently of much more

recent date. Reverting to the doorway at the junction of the south transept and nave, (which, as before observed, is the only Norman entrance remaining,) it consists of a series of concentric arches, embellished with no less than six various enrichments, and supported by four beautiful twisted columns, two on either side, with grotesque capitals: the soffit of the arch is also covered with four-leaved roses in a lozenge form. Some antiquaries have considered this relic as more ancient than any other part of the edifice; but its similarity to some of the doors, particularly in the south, of Iffley church, in Oxfordshire—which, according to Dr. Ingram, was built in the twelfth century—is so remarkable, that few will be inclined to assign an earlier period for its having been erected. Close to it, on the western side of the south transept, is a very remarkable representation of the holy rood; the figure of our Saviour, in relief, is extended on the cross; his arms occupying two slabs, which are placed in the wall horizontally; his body, which is partly covered with a short vest, pendent from the middle, is attached to a long perpendicularly-shaped stone, having a rudely-carved hand extended

from the clouds, and pointing to the Saviour beneath. The figure, which is about five feet and a half high, has suffered little from the ravages of time or demolition, if we except the loss of the right fore-arm and shoulder. Immediately on the left is a square recess in the wall, with small holes in the upper part to carry off smoke—it being a constant practice, in the days of Roman catholicism, to keep lamps or tapers burning day and night before the images of the saints. There is no doubt that this figure is exceedingly ancient, though certainly not coëval with the doorway adjoining, as proved by the fact of the stones immediately above the slabs, which support the arms, being extremely thin when compared with those of which the wall is generally composed, and evidently placed there to fill up a vacuum, which the insertion of this figure had occasioned. However that may be, it is an incstimateable relic, and before it has many a high-born maiden, ere she passed through the richly ornamented doorway, which formed the eastern entrance to the nave, bent the knee, in unaffected though mistaken adoration. The front of the southern transept is similar in its architectural

composition to the north; and we may pass on to the place from which we started, without any remarkable attraction to detain us.

In summing up the consideration of the exterior of this church, three things, as yet unnoticed, may be pointed out for attentive observation: firstly, the curious parapet and mouldings which completely surround the building, and which are supported by corbels, composed entirely of curiously-carved heads, etc.: these are very remarkable towards the eastern parts, and afford a splendid specimen of the Norman parapet. Secondly, the fact that, with the exception of the west and east ends, the original walls remain entire, as may be proved by the existence of the plain wide Norman buttresses projecting but little from the main building, and terminating in the parapet, to which attention has already been called. Lastly, in considering the external appearance of the tower, we find thereon indications that other roofs of much more elevated pitch than the present, formerly covered the church; for while we perceive that the present roof runs flush up to the apex of the western front, we also note, that the gable of the north transept is left

standing, as it were, in the air. And if other proof were necessary than its exact elevation with the marks in the tower, we might adduce, not only the windows now blocked up in the upper angle, but the positive traces of lead which formerly covered the ancient steps ascending the original roof, and which are most distinctly visible on the north side of the tower.

On entering the interior of the church by the northern transept, the grand cathedral design of the architect opens itself to the astonished spectator: all before him is Norman—beautiful Norman! The fine lofty arches which support the tower at the intersection of the nave and transepts, the portions of the choir and nave, with their pillars separating the aisles, the triforium (or first stage of arches above them), and the clerestory (or upper gallery), all rich in elaborate mouldings and tracery, present a prospect which must be seen to be properly appreciated. But as the limits of this little work will not admit lengthened dissertations on subjects which would render volumes interesting, we will continue our remarks, taking the grand portions of

the building according to the periods of time in which they have evidently been built. Whatever the popular opinion respecting the date of this church's erection may be, whether we are to consider the present walls as rising up under the auspices of Edgar or Ethelwold, or assign the existing structure to later ages, one fact is evident that there are three most distinct styles of English architecture, which followed each other consecutively, to be observed in the composition of this noble pile. Its first and chief features are Norman; and the transepts, choir, and part of the nave, are specimens of first-rate excellence in that style. There is in the nave, a very remarkable column, in the two first divisions, on the south side from the transept, which has also a counterpart on the north. That excellent antiquary, Mr. Britton, endeavours to establish the real age of this building by these columns; "for," he says, "the height to which they are carried up, which is to the spring of the arches that support the clerestory, and the manner in which they receive the great arches beneath the triforium, together with their general form and character, correspond so nearly with the

most ancient parts of Christchurch, Oxford, that we may reasonably suppose both edifices to have been in progress at the same time.” He adds, “there is much reason to believe that Christchurch was commenced by Prior Guymond, in the reign of Henry I., and the general style of the architecture of Romsey church, (including the transepts,) will fully warrant our assigning it to the early part of the same reign; although it was probably designed, if not commenced, in that of Rufus.” But the hypothesis respecting Christchurch becomes questionable, if we rely on the opinion of Dr. Ingram, who (in his “Memorials of Oxford,” the pages of which display deep research, learning, and science,) denies to Prior Guymond the building of a church, which he considers to have been erected long before his time; and from Dr. Ingram’s remarks we are led to conclude, that the columns alluded to by Mr. Britton, could only have been imitative of similar pillars in Christchurch, most probably erected by “Robert de Cricklade (Crickladensis) or Canutus,” when he made the Norman additions to the original Saxon work in that cathedral. This, however, does not invalidate Mr. Britton’s assumption with

regard to Romsey, which, indeed, is rather strengthened by other portions of the church: thus, for instance, we observe many shafts composing a pillar; and this is very evident in the four great columns which support the tower in Romsey church; for the single-shafted pillar is by no means the grand characteristic here, as it is in Waltham Abbey, Essex, and other buildings, whose more remote origin admits no doubt. Judging, therefore, from its complete cathedral plan, the florid nature of much of its early architecture, the elongation of its pillars, and the close affinity, in parts, to the style which succeeded, there is every reason to conclude, that its real age cannot be traced back farther than the time of Henry II. or Stephen, in whose reigns Norman architecture had attained its greatest perfection, and gradually gave way to the introduction of the pointed arch. Public opinion has, until these few years, favored the supposition, that the present building was standing at the period of the Conquest; but latterly, the pages of Britton, Dallaway, Pugin, Rickman, and others, have thrown a new light upon early ecclesiastical architecture: they have chased away the fanciful theory of

Warburton, and the surmises of Sir Christopher Wren, who, great only in classic art, understood not the ancient buildings of his native land. They did even more than this; they proved, by the actual comparison of buildings whose periods of erection were *certainly* known, that oral tradition and local legend are not always to be depended on, respecting those edifices whose origin has been lost sight of in the lapse of ages. That there was a church here from the year 972 to the Conquest, is doubted by none: at all events, at the latter period it is distinctly mentioned in Doomsday-book, “in qua sedet ipsa ecclesia;” but it does not necessarily follow, that the present is that identical temple; neither, perhaps, can we admit that there are any indications about it favorable to such a supposition, and for the following reasons. It is well known that, almost immediately after the fall of the Saxon dynasty, Norman priors, abbots, and abbesses, superseded those principals of religious houses who had been appointed in the days of Harold and the Confessor; and it is also upon record, that they availed themselves of every pretext to rebuild the monasteries and cathedrals: thus “igne consumpta,”

“totaliter combusta,” are constantly repeated by the monks, respecting the religious erections of the Saxon era. Rochester Cathedral is acknowledged as the work of Gundulph, who flourished in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; Durham was finished by Ranulf Flambard, A. D. 1133; Gloucester, Peterborough, Old St. Paul’s, and many others, are well known to have been built, none earlier than the Conquest, and many not until late in the twelfth century. Such also was, doubtlessly, the case with the monasteries, etc.; indeed, we have proof that great alterations had taken place in the style of building in the days of William of Malmesbury, A. D. 1140, who says, “*videas ubique in villis ecclesias, in vicis et urbibus monasteria, novo edificandi genera consurgere.*” What that “*novum edificandi genus*” was, is proved by the buildings before stated, which are positively assigned to that period, and with them the church of Romsey very generally agrees; indeed, it is scarcely probable, that a nunnery, which was considered the first nursery for females in England, and which we know to have been well endowed, should be kept in primitive simplicity, while almost every village

church was made to exhibit the newer fashion of the times. Those well-known architectural writers, Dallaway and Warner, have attributed the church of Romsey to the middle of the twelfth century. The first says, “Henry de Blois, bishop of Winchester, from 1129 to 1169, a most celebrated architect, built the conventional churches of St. Cross and Romsey, in Hampshire;” and the last, speaking of Norman architecture, states, that the most celebrated specimens which he could recollect, were “the church of St. Cross, built by Henry de Blois, 1130, and the Abbey Church of Romsey, in Hampshire, especially the latter, built by the same princely benefactor.”

The choir is very beautiful, and the ceiling of the chancel has, within these few years, been painted in tasteful compartments:—it contains various coats of arms, roslettes, etc. The walls of the choir are carried up between the columns, and form a shelter from the winds, which eddy through the aisles: this is evidently the work of later times, as may be proved by the traces of an ambry, or locker, on the north side of the altar, which had been destroyed by the filling-in of the arch. The

north and south doors of the chancel are Norman; they are evidently inserted, and have been removed from some other portions of the building:/* and on some of the capitals are exceedingly curious sculptures, which baffle conjecture with regard to their original signification. Dr. Latham, in the 14th and 15th volumes of the *Archæologia*, has attempted to prove that the sculpture on the capital of the column in the north aisle, at the end of the choir, (which represents a field of battle with two armed kings, whose deadly strife is arrested by two winged figures or angels,) refers to the battle between Alfred and Guthrum; and that the sculpture on the corresponding capital in the south aisle is emblematical of the royal founders, Edward the Elder and Edgar. There are, perhaps, very few who would be inclined to dwell on the first hypothesis, but the second is certainly deserving of attention. In the centre we observe a crowned

* This fact was established by the researches of Mr. Major, the sexton, whose acumen in the study of antiquity, and zeal for architectural investigations, render him an invaluable companion to every interested visitor to the church.—Mr. Thos. Loader also, builder in this Town, deserves most honorable mention, inasmuch as he has carried out the restoration in the church to the admiration of everybody.

figure, standing and holding a pyramid: this was probably intended for Edward; for it seems to have been a favorite practice with the ancients to represent the founder of any building as holding a church in his hands: thus, in the beautiful screen in Canterbury Cathedral, the figure of St. Ethelbert is distinguished; and the pyramid before us may have been intended, by the architect of Romsey Church, to convey a similar meaning. There are also two other figures, one of which is seated, with a crown on his head, (probably Edgar,) and assisted in the support of a kind of angular rule or chevron by a winged figure, which was, doubtless, intended for an angel. It is worthy of remark, that on this chevron are inscribed the words, “ Robert me fecit;” and from this circumstance, taken in connexion with a corresponding chevron, sustained by two other figures on the right, whereon are the words “ Robert tute consule d.s.,” Mr. Latham has deduced a theory, and supposed the legend to contain the name of the architect who superintended the building of this Church. It is not improbable that the name of a benefactor to the edifice may have been alluded to. We read in Sandford, that

Robert, natural son of Henry I., was created *consul* or earl of Gloucester; and Dallaway, in his Discourse upon Architecture, states, that he built the castles of Bristol and Cardiff, and the tower of Tewkesbury. Thus identified with the art of building, may it not be possible that this abbey also owes something of its erection to his patronage and support?

There are several other curiously-ornamented capitals in this part of the church, particularly one at the eastern extremity, which represents a man combating a dragon or lion, and is probably intended either for St. George or Sampson. The aisles, at their eastern terminations, are remarkable as affording very fine instances of the apsis, or circular chapel—a form adapted, no doubt, in imitation of the ancient basilica of the Romans.* Leaving the choir, with its quaint and curious carvings, (which, indeed, abound throughout the building, and

* "According to Isidore, the Basilicæ were the palaces of the ancient kings. They were the law courts of the Romans, and the spot appropriated to the tribunal was of a circular form. When they were made use of in the early Christian times for religious assemblies, here sat the bishop on an elevated seat, his family on either hand, and the altar in front. It became afterwards the apsis of the church."—Archæologia, vol. xi.

present a rich feast for the diligent inquirer,) we proceed to the consideration of the nave, which has seven arches on each side: and here may be perceived the exact point of separation between the Norman and early English portions; for the four arches from the junction of the transepts are circular, and the columns supporting them generally single, whilst the three adjoining the western end have pointed arches and elegantly-clustered pillars. This portion of the building marks its second stage of architecture, known by the name of early English, which, as before observed, superseded the Norman, and in all probability originated in the intersection of two arches springing from the extremes of one common base. As it is unnecessary to refer to Euclid for proof that such arrangement would cause the formation of an equilateral triangle, we will consider the subject more immediately before us. From the preservation of the external Norman walls, there can be little question of the original interior of this part having been adapted to the early English style; and although, minutely considered, its details do not possess any very striking quality, yet, taken generally as a whole,

it presents a fine specimen of the alteration in ecclesiastical building which took place about the reign of Richard I. The pointed arch has been introduced in the triforium and clerestory, and the great three-light window at the west end is not, perhaps, surpassed by any thing in this country; each of its portions is long and narrow, with an arch of an equilaterally-triangular lancet-shaped form. The third marked distinction in the architecture of this ancient edifice is the decorated, known by its tracery running in waved or flowing lines: it is visible in the eastern windows, the dates of which have already formed matter for consideration. The length of this church, according to the curious description given in the Addenda to Browne Willis's Mitred Abbies, is 240 feet, and its width, that is to say, the length of the transept, 120 feet: his words are—"Ecclesia de Rumeseye, de fundatione regis Edgari, continet in longitudine circa 90 *steppys*, et parum ultra; item in latitudine continet circa 46 *steppys* meos." The height of the tower is about 93 feet, and that of the body of the church is said to be 80 exactly.

We will now conclude this portion of our sketch

by exhorting such of our readers as may have taste and opportunities for so doing, to study diligently the remains of ancient English architecture. There is a wide—a beautiful field before them. From the period of the departure of the Romans to the coming of St. Augustine, (when the erection of ecclesiastical buildings became not only a matter of intense interest, but was considered, if we may use the term, as a *pavimentum* to a world of bliss beyond the grave,) up to the later periods, nay, even to the present, when happily a clearer knowledge of the subject has sprung up among us, their course will be marked by a series of delightful research and discovery. They will trace the rude and humble imitation of the Roman orders in our earliest specimens; they will observe how even they were improved, and made to assume a majesty of character, as the *influx* of foreign talent, and the constant passage of ecclesiastics to and from the court of Rome, caused the adaptation of some elegance or beauty in their own churches, which they had observed in the City of the Seven Hills; and they will follow, with enthusiasm, a course of study, which the simplicity of the early English,

the delicate beauty of the decorated, and the gorgcous splendor and elaborate ornament of the perpendicular styles, cannot but render a source of rcfined and intellectual gratification.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE VARIOUS MONUMENTS AND SEPULCHRAL REMAINS.

FROM the character of the ancient monuments and slabs in the pavement of this church, it seems probable that, up to the period of the dissolution of religious houses, the interments were generally confined to females, as no relic is to be seen which would lead us to suppose that it covered the remains of book-learned priest or belted knight. There are, dispersed about the building, many coffin-shaped stones, which have evidently been turned upside down: some have been adopted as modern grave-stones; but there is no doubt that, if restored to their former positions, they would exhibit the usual representation of a cross. One of them near the font, was lately examined, and on the under side were found the remains of a beautiful cross flory; but the slab having lain in a damp situation, and being composed of Sussex marble, its surface had almost crumbled to pieces.

In the south transept, and beneath a large and elegant ogee canopied arch, is a very fine and curious monumental effigy of a female,* which, with the canopy over the head, has been cut out of one block of Purbeck marble. The canopy, which is guarded externally by two mutilated but beautifully-sculptured figures, probably of angels, contains a pointed trifoliated arched recess, and is supported at each termination by a female figure, one of which has a wimple, the other is represented as bare-necked: around the tomb is a cornice of shields and leaves placed alternately. The effigy is recumbent and habited in a loosely-flowing gown or robe, with tight sleeves, which falls in folds down to the feet, and is fastened at the waist by a band and buckle; over this is an open mantle or cloak, connected at the shoulders by a cordon, and gathered up in graceful folds under the left arm, the opposite portion being supported in the right-hand. The left-hand of the figure rests upon her bosom, and grasps the cordon which connects the mantle at the shoulders. The head is supported

* A beautiful engraving of it will be found in Messrs. Hollis' elegant work on "Monumental Effigies."

by a cushion, and covered by a kind of pedimented tire, on either side of which appears the wimple, passing round beneath the chin: above, and dependent from the head-dress, is a hood, the lower extremities of which lie upon the shoulders; the shoes are pointed, and a lion sustains the pressure of the feet. This noble relic of ancient art was found some years ago, while the workmen were digging at the west end of the church, and as it fitted the canopied recess in which it at present lies, has probably resumed a place from which it had been removed, to avoid the blind and bigoted zeal of the iconoclasts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It has been usually considered as the monument of Mary, daughter of king Stephen, who was abbess of this nunnery, and who will be more particularly alluded to hereafter; but, independently of the sculpture agreeing with the best known later specimens of the *thirteenth century*, the absence of any regal insignia or abbatial distinction, renders such a conclusion far from probable. There is in the monument a remarkably similar feature to one in Westminster Abbey, which, in all probability, was the model for many of the

tombs of the period, and which may, perhaps, be considered as likely to fix the time of its erection. Eleanor, the beloved wife of Edward I., is represented as *grasping with the left hand, which rests on her bosom*, the cordon connecting the mantle in which she is attired. This fact is curious, as showing the fashion of that day; and from the general character of the Romsey monument, it may be confidently predicated, that no Benedictine abbess or king's daughter ever mouldered to dust beneath it, but that some female of consequence, who lived about the time of Edward I., slept honored and distinguished, beneath a monument which has ceased to record even a vestige of her name.*

In the nave is a slab on the floor much mutilated, which will be more minutely alluded to in the account of the abbesses, and near it is the fragment of a stone coffin-lid, containing a portion of a cross (botoné), evidently of great antiquity: near it is a stone, measuring 11 feet 5 inches in

* As the noble family of Walrand were possessed of the neighbouring manor of Spursholt, it is not improbable but that this elegant monument was erected in memory of Isabella de Kilpec, mother of the Abbess Alicia Walrand.—Vide chapter vi.

length, and 3 feet 9 inches wide, composed of Purbeck marble, which has formerly been inlaid with brass; the matrices of a cross flory and of the legend which went round, are still distinctly visible. In 1845 an interment was discovered beneath it, which is thus described by Mr. Ferry, the talented architect, who directed the restoration of the church.

“ Great care was exercised in raising the stone. Upon its being moved, there was discovered immediately under it, a stone coffin, 5 feet 10 inches long by 2 feet wide in the broadest part, and 1 foot deep; containing the skeleton of a priest in good preservation, the figure measuring only 5 feet 4 inches in length, the head elevated and resting in a hollow cavity worked out of the stone, so as to form a cushion. He had been buried in the vestments peculiar to his office, viz. the alb and tunic. Over his left arm was the *maniple*, and in his hand the chalice, covered with the paten. Considering these remains to be at least 500 years old, it is remarkable that they should be in such preservation. The chalice and the paten are of pewter, the latter much corroded; a great portion

of the linen alb remain; the maniple is of brown velvet, fringed at the extremity, and lined with silk; portions of the stockings remain, and also all the parts of the boots, though, from the decay of the sewing, they have fallen to pieces. About two feet from the end of the coffin is a square hole through the bottom, with channels worked in the stone conducting to it: this was probably a provision to carry off the fluids, which would be caused by the decomposition of the body. On the sides of the coffin could be traced the marks of the corpse where it was first deposited, from which it would appear that the deceased had been stout, as well as short in stature. It is to be regretted that the inscription being stripped from the verge of the slab, we have no means of knowing whose remains these are. The Purbeck marble slab had never been disturbed, being found strongly secured by mortar to the top of the stone coffin: it is curious that the covering should be so gigantic, and the coffin under it so small: judging from the size of the slab and the beauty of the large floriated cross, it might have been supposed to cover some dignified ecclesiastic. This is clearly not the case; the vestments found

being such only as belong to the humbler grade of the clergy. Perhaps the great size of the cross on the slab (which has, indeed, the peculiarities of a processional cross) may be intended to designate the office of the deceased, whose duty it might have been (if a sub-deacon) to carry the cross on solemn festivals. This is, however, mere conjecture; but it can scarcely be concluded that a Purbeck marble slab of such magnitude, as compared to the coffin, would be fixed without some special reason or meaning. In the absence of any known date, judging from the impress on the marble, and the shape of the stone coffin, I should assign both to the early part of the fourteenth century.”

On the north side of the south ambulatory, placed upright against the wall, is a half-length coffin-lid entire; it measures 3 feet 2 inches in height, is 2 feet 9 inches wide at the top, and 2 feet 4 inches wide at the bottom; it has a border round it, within which is a hand holding a pastoral crook. Nearly opposite are two coffin-shaped slabs, one of which has been engraved in Carter's *Ancient Architecture*; it measures 5 feet in length, is 22 inches wide at top, and 14 at bottom, and is

surmounted by a beautiful cross flory; on one side is a pastoral crook, the point of which is inserted in the mouth of a dragon, and the right-hand of an abbess is represented as eoming over the edge of the stone to hold it. The other is also adorned with a cross flory, and measures 6 feet 2 inches in length, the width at the head is 22, at the foot 10 inches. The first is remarkable for the elegant manner in which its ornaments are expressed: from its close proximity to the wall, it has comparatively suffered but little from the tread of the passer-by, and remains, a beautiful specimen of the coffin-lid of the twelfth century. There is, at the front of the altar-steps, a stone containing a matrix once filled with the brass figure of an abbess—the trace of the pastoral crook being distinctly visible; and the vestiges of another may be perceived on the south side of the altar, the brass studs of which yet remain. The only brass left in the church is on the south side of the communion-table, and contains the following:—

Here lyeth ye. body of Iohn Hayward, somtime Mayor of
this Towne, who trvsted in Christ Iesvs for ye. redemption
of his sovle: He died ye. 13th of November, 1619

ÆTATIS SVÆ 58.

A beautiful altar-tomb, in the perpendicular style, on the north side of the chancel, affords a sad instance of the misguided zeal of the early reformers. The shields of arms which adorned the sides, and the brass of an abbess holding a pastoral crook, have been torn away: every feature by which we might have hazarded a guess at the individual it was intended to commemorate, has been completely abstracted, and we gaze only upon one of the many fruitless attempts to perpetuate a name.

Among the monuments of more recent date, the first which presents itself to notice is one in the south transept, erected to the memory of John St. Barbe, esq., and Grissell his wife. On the monument, which has lately been cleaned and put into a state of thorough repair, is the following inscription:—

An Epitaph vpon John St Barbe
 Esq the sone of Henry St Barbe
 Esq and Grissell his wife the
 daughter of John Pynsent
 Esq he about the 42
 yeare of his age - and she the
 22 yeaire of her age
 leaving fower sonns Henry
 John Francis and Edward
 slept in the Lord.

Earth's rich in mines of pretious dust; Whom nature, wedlock, grace did tie
 Since in her bowels rest these just; And faithful ones: In one fast chain of unity;
 Dead here doe rest yet left not earth Whose silent bones Because such righteous & theire seed
 But brought fower sons to perfect birth To fame and state Shall florish here and shall in deed
 Tryumph 'ore fate.

Au anagram upon theire names { JOHN } SAINT BARBE
 { GRISSELL }

BEIN SHARES IN BLEST GLORIE

The memory of ye. wicked shall rott bvt ye. remembrance
 of ye. Ivst shall live for ever.

Above the monument are the arms of St. Barbe, checky argent and sable, and between the busts are the same impaling Pynsent, gules, a chevron engrailed argent between three stars of the same. The bust of the warrior is represented in armour; his lady is veiled and wears a small necklace, with

her mantle tied in front: both have long hair, and were originally painted. Facing the spectator are the effigies of four children, standing. The whole is prettily arranged, and without any appearance of stiffness.

This family were formerly owners of Broadlands, which estate they sold to the great-grandfather of the present lord viscount Palmerston. On the monument it is stated, that John St. Barbe and his wife Grissell were buried on the 2d September, 1658; their son John, according to Dr. Heylin, was created a baronet by Charles the Second, on the 30th December, 1663. A few years since there was a book belonging to the parish records, which, among other curious matter respecting the civil wars of Charles I., contained an account of a St. Barbe, who was brought from the field of Newbury, and died at Broadlands, of the wounds he received in the battle there in 1643. He was, probably, the Henry St. Barbe mentioned on the monument.

In the south ambulatory is an elegant monument in the style which prevailed throughout the seventeenth century, to the memory of Robert Brackley,

esq. The tomb, which is an imitation of porphyry, consists of a sarcophagus beneath an arch, enriched with gilding and arabesque ornaments. The soffit of the arch is adorned with red and white roses, placed in alternate compartments, and the whole is supported by Corinthian pillars of black marble, the capitals of which are richly gilt and decorated. On it is inserted the following inscription:

Hic iacet Robertvs Brackley
Generosvs qui oblit 14to die
Avgvsti anno Domini 1629.
Impensis Richardi Brackley
execvtoris svi.

Here lyes the man that gave the poore
Some meane ovt of his little store
Let none therefore THIS fame deoy him
But rather take example by him
In spight of death in after dayes
Tu pvrchase to bimself like prayse.

The benefaction alluded to in the above lines has, unfortunately, been lost to the poor. According to the Report of the Commissioners for Inquiry concerning Charities, made in July, 1825, there was in 1691 an annual entry of £8, which was vested in the Corporation of Romsey for charitable purposes. From that time to the year 1721 the

mayor's accounts are missing; and in those which commence 1722, no traces of the above, and many other charitable bequests, amounting in all to £711 13s. 4d., are to be met with.

Immediately adjoining is an elegant white monument:—on a tablet, supported by death's heads between two pillars, and surrounded by laurels, palm-branches, etc. is the following:—

P

M S

Ioannis Kent Armigeri

Olim de Civitate Londinensi Silkethrower

hujusce postea oppidi bis Prætoris
et Comitatus Sovthtoniæ nuper

Vice=Comitis

Viri

Eximiae erga Deum pietate,

Erga suos benignitate et amore,

Erga alios probitate et humanitate

Erga pauperes (tam currente vita
quam exacta) beneficentia,

Apprime illustris et spectabilis.

Obiit 2do die Novembris anno Domini 1692^o

Annoq: Ætatis 70mo:

Qui cum una requiescit Ivditha uxor

Charissima simul atque amantissima:

Quæ decessit e vita 15^o die Novembris 1674^o

Annoq. Ætatis 63^o.

Vtrique hoc monumemtum posuere

Gratitudinis et pietatis ergo

Thomas Shory Iohauncs Bvtler et

Thomas Bvtler prædicto Joanni Kent
 Multis nominibus devinctissimi
 Supremi Testamenti
 Cvratores.

Both John Kent and the executor of his will, Thomas Shory, were extensive benefactors to the poor of Romsey. Four almshouses and various annuities still continue, a proof of their charitable dispositions.

Almost immediately opposite, is an elegant white marble monument, with fluted pillars and Ionic capitals, above which were formerly represented three ships under sail, with the following epitaph:—

Here lyeth interred ye body of Iohn Storke
 Who was twice Mayor of this Corporation
 Who died the xixth of December, MDCCXI, aged LXXI
 Also Mercy his wife who died XXIID of May, MDCCXI
 And John Storke their Eldest Son,
 Who died the IIID of July MDCCXXIIII aged LVI
 Also Mary his Wife
 Who died the xxxth of November MDCCXXIV, aged XXXII.
 Sarah wife of Thomas Storke their second Son
 Who died the xixth December, MDCCXXVII, aged LXI
 Samuel Storke their youngest Son
 Merchant of London who died there
 The vith of September MDCCXLVI aged LIX.
 Was buried here at his own desire.

And in a compartment beneath is inscribed,

To whose memory this monument is erected
By Samuel Storke Esq. Merchant of London
His only surviving Son.

On a shield are the arms of Storke—azure, a stork
argent within a bordure ermine; impaling gules,
a wolf issuing out of a wood proper.

It is a matter of great regret that this fine monu-
ment, and those of Brackley and Kent, should be
in their present dilapidated state: a few years more
will probably destroy them, unless the descendants
of Storke should come forward to rescue their
ancestors from oblivion; and the beneficent actions
of the two last should cause, in the breasts of those
who still continue to profit by their bequests, a
desire that the memory of the generous should not
perish for ever.

Beneath, and not far from this monument, a
small slab points out where rest the remains of the
ingenious and celebrated Sir William Petty, ances-
tor of the noble house of Lansdowne:

Here layes Sir William Petty.

The middle-eastern portion of the church was
until lately most injudiciously filled up by the
erection of a large vault, which served both the

purposes of monument and grave,—the coffins within being at a considerable height above the pavement of the aisle. This has now been entirely removed, and the slab affixed to the wall:—

In this vault are the remains
of

George Bridges, Esq.

of Siddington, in Gloucestershire,

Brother to Mrs. Barton, wife of Robert Bartoo, Esq.

He was a collateral Branch in the male line
of the Chandos family;

and uncle to the Rt. Hon. Lord Baron Pelham
of Stanmer, in Sussex.

He died the 24th March, 1778, aged 72 years.

Also, the remains of

Mrs. Delitia Barton, wife of Robert Barton, Esq.
and

Sister of George Bridges, Esq.—

She died 15th May, 1789, aged 75 years.

Also, the remains of

Robert Barton, Esq.

who died April 3, 1798, aged 90 years.

On the tomb are the arms,—argent, a chevron sable, between three bears'-heads gules, a crescent for difference, impaling argent, a cross sable, charged with a leopard's head gules irradiated or.

In the south-eastern corner of the church, is a tablet to the memory of another benefactor to the poor of Romsey. John Bartlett, esq., who died Sept. 11, 1817, at the age of 83, left £6700, 3 per

cent. consols, in trust, for the endowment of six tenements which he had built in the town; and the rest of his estate he directed so to be disposed of in the public funds, that the interest arising therefrom might be paid, in equal moieties, to the Salisbury Infirmary and the County Hospital at Winchester.

Before the steps of the altar is a stone, containing this quaint inscription:—

Behold interred here lies under
A light, a treasvre, and a wonder:
A light to all ber hvsbands treasvre,
Wonder of Woemen: 'twas God's pleasvre.

ELIZABETHA APPLEFORD vxor DANIELIS APPLEFORD
Generosi Obiit 17 Nov. 1630.

Against the west wall of the nave is a monument which will ever command respect and admiration as the work of the gifted and talented Flaxman. Two beautifully-carved figures of angels support a wreath and scroll:—

Sacred to the Memory of
HENRY VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, BARON TEMPLE,
And of
MARY VISCOUNTESS PALMERSTON,
His Second Wife,
Whose remains are deposited near this Place.
He was born the 4th Dec. 1739,

Succeeded his Grandfather, Viscount Palmerston, 10th June, 1767,

And departed this life the 16th April, 1802;

She was born in 1754,

And departed this life the 20th January, 1805.

They left two Sons, Henry and William;

And two Daughters, Frances and Elizabeth,

To lament their early and irreparable loss.

To those who knew the tenor of their days,

'Twere worse than needless to recount their praise;

To those by whom their virtues were unknown,

For cold applause the picture would be shown;

And proud affection asks not for their bier,

The casual tribute of a stranger's tear.

With aching bosoms and with bleeding hearts,

We marked those sighs with which the spirit parts,

Yet bowed submissive to the chastening rod,

Nor dared to question the decrees of Gov.

More blest to live they die in him who trust

He deals his mercies when he calls the just.

Next to the foregoing is a monument adorned with urns and arabesque; among which is a small tablet containing an elegant little figure of a woman weeping. It was erected to the memory of the first wife of the late Lord Palmerston; and we learn, from the inscription, that,

In the Vault beneath

Are deposited the remains

OF FRANCES VISCOUNTESS PALMERSTON,

Daughter of Sir Francis Poole, Bart.:

She was married to Henry Viscount Palmerston, Oct. 6th, 1767,

And died in childbed, June 1st, 1769.

With the noble Virtues that elevate our Nature,
She possessed the softer Talents that adorn it:
Pious, humble, benevolent, candid, and sincere,
She fulfilled the Duties of Humanity;
And her Heart was warm with all its best Affections.
Her Sense was strong, her Judgment accurate,
Her Wit engaging, and her Taste refined;
While the Elegance of her Form,
The Graces of her Manner,
And the natural Propriety
That ever accompanied her Words and Actions,
Made her Virtues doubly attractive,
And taught her equally to command
Respect and Love.
Such she lived, and such she died:
Calm and resigned to the Dispensations of Heaven,
Leaving her disconsolate Friends
To deplore her Loss,
And cherish the dear Remembrance
Of that Worth
They honoured living,
And lament in Death.
To the Memory of the best of Wives, the best of Friends,
He for whom She joined those tender Names,
Dedicates this Marble.

On the monument are these arms—quarterly 1 and 4 or, an eagle displayed sable; 2 and 3 argent, two bars sable, each charged with three martlets or, for Temple and impaling, azure, semée of fleurs de lis or, a lion rampant argent, for Poole.

The south wall of the western end contains a very beautiful monument, in what is called the

Tudor style of Gothic architecture; it is richly adorned with quatre-foils and vine-leaves, charged with bunches of fruit. The inscription is in the old English black-letter, and as follows:—

Sacred to the Memory of
ELIZABETH,
Wife of Laurence Sulivan, esq. of Broom House, Middlesex,
and daughter of Henry, second Viscount Palmerston.

Her Nature was gentle, her Judgment sound;
Her Faith humble, cheerful, and practical.
Possessed of varied talents and acquirements,
She was unconscious of her own excellence.
Unwearied in the fulfilment of every domestic & every social Duty,
She was indulgent to the failings of others.
Deeply respected, Tenderly beloved,
She expired on the 13th Nov. 1837, in the 48th year of her age.

She left two sons and three daughters.

On the monument is a shield, beautifully painted, containing—per fesse, the base per pale, in chief or, a dexter hand couped at the wrist grasping a sword erect, gules, the blade entwined with a serpent proper, between two lions combatant, of the second, the dexter base vert, charged with a buck trippant or, on the sinister base per pale argent and sable, a boar passant counterchanged, for Sulivan, and impaling Temple (as previously

emblazoned). The motto, “ LAME FOISDINEACH AN UACHTAR.”

A little to the eastward of the foregoing is another chaste and elegant memorial, also in the Tudor style, erected very lately to Frances, wife of Captain Bowles,—a lady whose benevolence and virtues will long be remembered in Romsey and its vicinity. The arms—azure, a sun in chief or, and a crescent in base, argent; a label for difference for Bowles impaling those of Temple—are very delicately painted. The inscription is,

To the memory of
FRANCES
The beloved wife of Captain Bowles, R.N.,
And eldest Sister of Lord Viscount Palmerston,
who died Nov. 30th, 1833, aged 53.

It may appear superfluous in this Sacred Edifice, where the fervency and sincerity of her Devotion has been so often witnessed, or in this Town and Neighbourhood where the Inhabitants so long enjoyed and fully appreciated the Blessing of her Example, Friendship, Instruction, and Assistance, to expatiate on the truly Christian virtues which this tablet is erected to commemorate.

They will be long tenderly and gratefully cherished in the hearts and recollection of the existing Generation, and may, it is hoped, by the Divine Blessing, stimulate succeeding ones to equal exertion in the Holy Cause of Religion and Charity; especially when they remember that her first object was to tread in the footsteps of her beloved and excellent Mother, and to maintain and improve all Her Institutions for the relief and education of the Poor.

Her mortal remains lie interred in All Souls' Cemetery, near London; but her bereaved and sorrowing Husband, while bowing with submission and resignation to the All-wise dispensations of Him who "gave" and "hath taken away," and making it his constant and earnest prayer, that he may be enabled so to follow her good example; that with her he may be made a partaker of the kingdom of Heaven, has felt a mournful satisfaction in erecting in this place a monument to her virtues and his own affections.

"Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

There are, interspersed about the church, many other interesting memorials of the dead; but our chapter, like those whom they were intended to commemorate, has come to an end, "as it were a tale that is told." Leave we then, for the present, the vestal nun, in her lone deep sleep of centuries; and the friend who has yesterday laid him down to that rest which knows no earthly waking, shall occupy our attention no longer. Imagination may depict the one—indelible recollection identifies the other. But we will depart from these sacred aisles, and for a while forbear to contemplate the spot, where moulder the bodies of those "on whos soules and all Christen soules Jesu have mercy! Amen, Amen."

CHAPTER V.

OF THE VARIOUS CURIOSITIES AND RECENT DISCOVERIES MADE IN THE CHURCH.

THE vesper-hymn of the assembled nuns in the choir of Romsey, has for upwards of three centuries ceased to roll through the massive aisles of its stately Abbey; even their tombs, with one *uncertain* exception, fail to record the places where they sleep: but there yet remains, on the table in the vestry, a relic which there is every reason to suppose was the workmanship of their hands. It consists of a beautiful but greatly-mutilated "palla" or altar-cloth, of green brocaded velvet, richly adorned with stars of six points, wavy, worked in gold; their centres resemble diamonds, and contain a kind of silver foil or thread, which yet continues extremely brilliant. The palla is edged with a deep border of tawny-colored velvet, exquisitely stellated, and adorned also with figures of birds, volant. Beyond this was formerly another rich edging, entirely composed of cloth of gold; but this

latter portion has been abstracted within the memory of persons yet living.

The pavement of the church demands the closest attention; and the spectator will be struck with the very great number and diversity of patterns, in the curious encaustic tiles of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which abound in the vestry, western end, and at the altar. Immediately under the carpet, before the communion table, are some on which are depicted knights in full charge, with their triangular shields hanging from their necks:—these are probably as old as the time of Edward the First.

Carefully preserved in a glass case, near the entrance to the vestry, is the greatest curiosity in the church. A head of hair, almost entire, and having a long plaited tail, rests upon a small block of oak, which formed the pillow in an ancient leaden coffin, discovered in October, 1839, while preparing a grave in the south aisle, near the second pier of the nave, on entering from the southern transept.

I am indebted to Mr. William Jenvey, who was churchwarden at the time, for the following exact

account of the disinterment, of which he was an eye-witness.—“ We came,” he writes, “ about five feet below the pavement, in contact with a leaden coffin, deposited in the earth, but without inscription of any kind. It was not of the shape now in use, but eighteen inches wide at the head, and tapered gradually down towards the foot, the width of which was thirteen inches only. The extreme length was five feet, and the depth one foot three inches. It was made of very thick lead, and might possibly weigh nearly two hundred weight—the metal being about ten pounds to the square foot. The coffin was put together in a very substantial manner, the seams being folded over each other and welded: it was probably constructed before the use of solder was known. From lying so long in the earth, the lid was much decayed, and bore a strong resemblance to the original lead ore. No bones whatever, either entire or broken, were found within; but there had been an oak shell, which was quite decayed, and mouldered into dust when exposed to the air. On removing the lid, a beautiful head of hair, with a tail plaited about eighteen inches long, evidently that of a

young female, was discovered. The hair was lying on a block of oak, cut out hollow on purpose to receive the head of the corpse, when deposited within its narrow abode. The hair was in perfect form, and appeared as though the skull had only been recently removed from it: it is preserved in a portable glass case, and lies on the same block of oak which has been its pillow for centuries."*

To the learned in such matters is left the solution, how it happens that the hair and wood should be the only relics of the original deposit. The preservation of the one may probably, and perhaps correctly, be attributed to the chemical properties of the oak; but our business is more immediately to consider whether the actual position of the coffin, when found, may not tend to establish what, in pages 29, 30, and 31, has been advanced, respecting the age of the present building.

It was not until the workmen had, with much labor, dug through a quantity of concrete and rubbish, which appeared to have belonged to some former edifice, that they discovered the coffin, lying

* The Gentleman's Magazine for August, 1840, contains an elaborate and learned article respecting the discovery of the above curious scalp, with an engraving of the coffin and the hair.

with its head towards the north-west—a position in which, it may be affirmed, ancient Christian sepulture never was permitted, and *partly covered by a portion of the contiguous pier* of the nave. This leaves no doubt of the body having been originally interred in some pre-existing edifice, and the obliquity of its position could only have been occasioned by forgetfulness or neglect at the erection of the present church. Now we know of no monastic establishment in this place, prior to that of Edward the Elder; and from the date of his death, 925, to the middle of the twelfth century, when, according to Warner and Dallaway, the existing edifice was erected, is a period of 225 years only—a course of time by no means sufficient for the destruction, from natural causes, even of a well-built tenement of modern times, far less for the annihilation of those heavy masses of masonry with which our Saxon ancestors are supposed to have loaded the earth. The fact of a former building in this place, which is thus established by this curious disinterment, will, at least, cause the advocate for the *aboriginal* antiquity of Romsey Abbey to pause, ere he insists on an hypothesis

which, in the opinions of many, cannot be borne out by any architectural features now belonging to it.

Where modern graves have been made, there is little question that many similar discoveries have taken place; and there can be no doubt, that in such portions of the pavement as have not been disturbed, the ancient dead may yet afford matter for future antiquarian disquisition.

The whole of the eastern portion of the church deserves the most minute attention: in ancient times it extended much further, and formed the “Ladye Chapelle” or retro-choir, in which, according to Fosbroke,* sick monks or nuns usually sat, during the performance of divine service. We may infer it to have been a favorite place of sepulture, from the number of stone coffins which have been found from time to time, while digging in the space which its former walls enclosed;—so lately as the year 1825, one was discovered, containing a skeleton. It was entirely hewn out of a block of granite, and was much wider at the head than any other part; there was, as usual, a cavity

* *Encycl. i. 97.*

for the reception of the skull, which was remarkably perfect: from the excellent state of the teeth and appearance of the sutures of the head, it probably contained the body of one who died long before attaining the meridian of life. This relic of mortality was, until these few months, kept in the broom-closet in the north transept; but by the directions of Mr. Jenvey, has been restored to its kindred earth.

In the north aisle of the nave, and opposite to the spot where the scalp of hair was found, another stone coffin was dug up on Saturday, the 31st October, 1840. The lid, from age and being formed out of a soft species of stone, broke in the attempt to take it off: within was a skeleton, quite perfect with the exception of the head, which was pronounced by a medical gentleman to be that of a female. It reached from end to end of the interior of the coffin, which was about six feet two inches in the clear. At each end of the lid was a strong iron ring, let in with an eye and fastened with lead, probably for the purpose of lowering it with safety upon the coffin.

In the little circular termination which forms

the apsis at the eastern end of the south aisle, there was formerly an altar; and there yet remains the piscina or lavacrum, into which the water used for rinsing the chalice and washing the priests' fingers at the celebration of mass was most carefully poured, in order that the same might not be used for any secular or unclean purpose. Durande, in his *Rationale*, points out the precise place in which this article of church-furniture should lie:—
“*Prope altare, quod Christum significat, collocatur piscina seu lavacrum.*”

Until lately the western part of the nave was separated from that appropriated to divine service by an ancient oak screen, which formerly divided the north transept from the body of the church, and was removed from thence about twenty years ago. The diligent observer, who will take the pains to find out this relic in its present locale under the roof, may yet trace on the right hand of the panel-door in this screen, a portion now filled in with a square piece of wood, where once were the triangular openings, through which the words of confession were transmitted; and he will find much to reward his labours in the curious and

well-carved faces which are contained in as many trefoils, surmounted by foliage, etc., crowning the top of this relic of the olden times.

The painted glass has been destroyed, with the exception of a small portion in the east window of the north aisle, where a remnant, about twelve inches by eight, is yet to be seen:—the colors are very beautiful, and the subject is said to be that of our Lord bearing his Cross. The roof of the tower is very ancient, and, with that of the nave, affords a beautiful specimen of the early English timber-roof, few of which are now known to be extant.

The unsightly mass of whitewash which for many years had enveloped the entire walls of the church, was removed by order of the former Vicar, the late Hon. and Rev. Gerard T. Noel, to whose generous zeal may be attributed the important alterations and real improvements which have lately been effected in this noble edifice.

Near the altar is a very curious and ancient Norman piscina. It had been torn from its base, which is still distinctly visible, at the side of the

great centre pier which supports the eastern end of the church.

The whole of this splendid edifice has, in ancient times been covered with paintings in fresco on the walls, many remains of which are discernible. About thirty years ago some rude old paintings were discovered, while making alterations immediately behind the altar. They were removed with great care: and although they have suffered much, and are indeed partly destroyed, enough of them remains to interest the curious. One of them is preserved in the south aisle of the chancel; it is about four feet in height, and two feet and a half wide: it represents a priest, praying, in a black gown with white fur: out of his mouth proceeds a scroll, on which is written, in ancient black-letter, "*Jesu fili Dei, miserere mei!*" The object of his adoration was on a panel, not now remaining; the back-ground of the picture represents tapestry, semée of birds' or beasts' heads in gold. The other has been much mutilated by the Decalogue having been nailed before it, and portions, at top and bottom, painted over. At present it contains nine figures, in compartments, among whom may

be perceived St. Sebastian, St. Roke, two female figures, probably the saints Merwenna and Elfleda; and a rude representation of the crucifixion, having, besides Roman soldiers and other accessories, a venerable figure with a scroll and crosier, on the first of which is inscribed, “*Surrecsit Dominus de sepulcro.*” They are all very rudely executed, and some so extremely ugly, that it must have been no small test of faith in our ancestors to have imagined anything divine in objects so exceedingly lugubrious.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE ABBESSES AND OTHERS.

WE have now discussed the principal attractive features connected with our subject, and have endeavoured in some degree to establish the probable period of the erection of the church, belonging to this religious foundation. Let us next consider the scanty details which have come down to our times, respecting those females to whom the charge of the nunnery was successively committed.

When king Edgar remodelled the institution of his grandfather, king Edward the Elder, A.D. 972, he appointed, as abbess of Romsey,

Merwenna.

This lady must have been a person of considerable importance, for we find her mentioned by Ingulphus as a subscribing witness to the charter given in 967, by Edgar, to the Abbey of Croyland, in Lincolnshire.

She is described, by Capgrave, as a devout handmaiden of the Lord, versed in scriptural knowledge, and diligent in performance of the divine commands: “*devota Dei famula, sanctitatis conversatione mansueta et in præceptis divinis studiosa.*” In the *Legende of Englonde*, published A. D. 1516, the virgin abbess Merwenne is stated to have been born in Ireland, and educated by St. Patrick. She forsook the world, and persuaded her brother to imitate her example. Information gleaned from such questionable sources, respecting those who lived so many centuries ago, is more valuable on account of its curiosity than for any real authenticity which it can possess; indeed, fable and legend so completely envelope the records of the cloister, that it is frequently difficult to divide truth from fiction in the perusal of them.

In the present instance we are gravely assured, that so great was the solicitude of Merwenna for the well ordering of the convent, that some trifling irregularities among the sisterhood, which took place after her death and before her body had been committed to the grave, were so annoying to her departed spirit, that

"she apperyd to ooe of the nonoes for to complayne, and told her that she herd some of the susters speyke in tyme of scylence, and that her bodye yet beying amoung them unburyed, she mervayled that they forgot her doctryoe and regnlar obseruance, and had them not to break the least obseruance, lest, by lytel and lytel, they fell into greater defaut, sayyng unto the suster that she apperyd unto that she should make her redy, for after cyghe daies she should come unto her: and so it was."

Merwenna must have been well known for her piety by king Edgar. Capgrave, although he mentions her as abbess of Romsey, has not given her life under that name: there is a long tedious legend respecting St. Modwenna, who was probably one and the same person. Leland, in his *Collectanea*, (vol. i. 68.) states, that St. Mudwenna was buried at Romsey: "Saneta Mudwenna sepulta Rumesiae;" and then, at another page, "Sancta Merwenna abbatissa in loco qui dicitur Rumesige, prope amnen Terstan aut Testa sepulta." On the death of Merwenna, according to the list furnished by Browne Willis to Mr. Tanner, when editing the second edition of his brother's *Notitia Monastica*, in 1743, the charge of the nunnery was entrusted to

Elwina.

During the ministry of this abbess the monastery

was plundered, in 994, by Sweyn; but the nuns, the holy relics, and everything of value, had been previously removed to Winchester. Of course, warning of this event could only be given by miraculous agency, and we are told that, while the abbess was prostrate in prayer, before the high altar, she heard a voice from heaven, telling her that the fiery Dane would be in Romsey on the following eve: “ante altare, in oratione procumbens, audire vocem meruit, cœlitus illapsum, de Danorum adventu ad monasterium Rumesiae in futura vespera. Quæ, assumptis reliquiis cæterisque rebus, una cum sororibus usque ad Wintoniam profugit. Veniens Rex itaque Danorum Swanus, ille sævissimus, cum filio suo Canuto, ad partes illas cæde et incendio cuncta vastavit.” Elwina, having ruled over the abbey for the space of three years, died, and is said to have been succeeded by

Elfleda.

There is some difficulty in being certain of this succession, as well as of forming a correct opinion respecting the parentage of this lady. Several writers state, that the abbess Elfleda was the daughter of Edward the Elder; others maintain

that her father was Ethelwold, one of the thanes, and a personal friend of king Edgar. Rapin, speaking of the children of the first-mentioned monarch, says, that “*Elfede, qui etait l'ainée, fut Abbesse de Romseye:*” if so, she must have been between seventy and eighty years of age at the time of her advancement; for Edward the Elder died in 925, and she must have succeeded Elwina about 996, a period of seventy-one years. Capgrave, *In Vitis Sanctorum*, states her to have been the daughter of Ethelwold; and as he expressly mentions her as educated at and constantly resident in Romsey, the curious may be gratified with the perusal of the translation of her life by him, from that rare work, the *Legende of Englond*, imprinted by the renowned Wynkyn de Worde.

“*Seynt Elfled was born in Englond, and when her moder was with chylde with her, she sawe in her slepe, a thynge like a shynge beame of lyghtenynge descend upon her hedde, and it tarryd there a long tynie. And when she was borne the more she grewe in age the more she wanted the ambycyonsness of all fleshlye plesures. And after her Faders deth, her Moder by her Faders wyll gave his mansyon that he dwellyd in called Clare to the monasterye of Rnmseye: and after, her moder took another husbonde, and then, as is oft seene in sch cases, Elfled lakkyd nftymes that that she nedyd. Wherfore Kynge Edgare, remembryng the good servyce of her Fader, put her to the monasterye of Romseye, under the Abbesse Merwenne; and she lnyd her as her own daughter,*

and brought her uppe in all vertue. And on a tyme her candell fell onte, and the fyngers of her ryghte honde gave lyghte to all that were rounde aboue her. Ane when she was therefore the more honouryde of her systers, she studyd to be therefore the more meke and obedyent. And after that she was made Abbesse no man can tell the almes that she gave, nor the prayers and wepyngs that she used, as well for herselfe as for the peple.—And on a tyme when she was with the Quene she went in the nyghts into the water and was there in prayer. And on a nyghte the Quene seynge her goo furthe suspected it had been for incuntynence and followyd; and when she saw her go into the water sodenly, she was astonyd, and went in a manner out of her mynde and turnyd in agayne cryenge, and colde take no rest till Seynt Elfleda prayed her, seyinge, “ Lord, forgyve her this offence for she wyst not what she dyd” and so she was made hoole. And when she was reprovyd as a waster of the goodys of the monastrye, certeyn money that she had given in almys, by her prayer was put into the haggys agayne. And when she had lyvyd many yerys in good lyfe, she wente to our Lorde, the fourth kalends of November aboue the yeare of our Lorde nyne hundred and fyfthe nyne.”

It is more than probable that the greater part of the preceding extract, like the miracles it recounts, never had any other origin than the fertile imagination of the Monk of Bury, and that the Elfleda of whom he speaks was really of the parentage described by Rapin. Peter de Langtoft expressly states that two of the daughters of Edward the Elder passed their lives in the cloister:

“ Elfled and saynt Eadburgh that lyved holy life.”

The anachronism also at the termination favors the

supposition; for it is not likely that the daughter of a king would wait until seventy years of age ere she presided over a nunnery which her own father had founded; whilst it is not improbable that the year 959 witnessed the termination of her earthly career, it being thirty-four years subsequent to the death of a parent, of whom she was the eldest daughter. The date of death also renders the story of Capgrave altogether worthless; for it is manifestly impossible that Elfleda, in her youth, could have profited by the kindness of king Edgar, and died, after a long and well-spent life, in the very year in which he commenced his reign. Another strong proof that he knew nothing of her except by name, may be deduced from William of Malmsbury, who wrote in 1140, and appears to have been ignorant of any circumstances connected with Merwenna or Elfleda; he simply states that they were buried at Romsey, and reserves to some other opportunity the task of writing their memoirs, should it ever be in his power to do so. His words are, “*Apud Rumesiam, quod cœnobium præcelentissimus Rex Edgarus instituit, novi jacere duarum virginum corpora, Merwennæ et Elfredæ:*

quarum gesta, *quod nescio*, non tam prætereo, quam ad majorem scribendi diligentiam reservo, si forte cognovero." (Fol. 46. b. n. 20.) Leland also states that she was buried at Romsey: "Sancta Ethelfleda in Rumesige prope amnem Terstan aut Testan sepulta." (Col. v. ii. 409.) It would appear then that the name Ethelfleda, Elfleda, etc. is here misplaced, as it is most likely that she presided over the monastery prior to the reign of Edgar: and, as far as her fair fame is concerned, it is well that such is the case; for her zealous biographer above quoted, adduces ugly complaints respecting her integrity, which are stated to have been disproved in a manner which we who live in modern times can imagine very easy of accomplishment, without the aid of miraculous interposition. But peace be with her! she has passed on her way, and her church and its absurdities have left us, we trust, for ever. Truth shines upon us with a more unclouded light than it did in her day; and thanks be given to that Great Being to whom they are ever due, that He has permitted us to worship Him in the beauty of His holiness; and that, unbound by the fetters of superstition, we seek not His presence



SEAL OF THE ABBESS HADEWIS

CIRCITER 1130."

through the imagined agency of those whose faults and follies have been disguised by the cunning of monks, or madly accounted for in falsifying legends.

The next abbess on record is

Hadewis,

who appears to have been appointed A. D. 1130: nothing is known of her with the exception of a deed still extant in the Augmentation Office, and that the seal used by this abbess was of an oval shape, having the impression on one side only: in the area was the representation of a nun, holding in her right hand a book clasped to her breast. Round the seal was this legend, "Sigil. St. Marie. Romes." She appears to have presided over the monastery about twenty-five years, as we find

Matilda

mentioned A. D. 1155. She could have been abbess but a very few years, for before 1160 she had been succeeded by

Mary.

This lady, whose romantic history has furnished a theme for every writer who has made mention of the Abbey, was the youngest and only surviving

daughter of king Stephen. Sandford, in his Genealogy, states, that she was first a nun and then became abbess of Romsey. It appears, however, that she received the earlier principles of education at the abbey of St. Sulpice, at Bourges, in France, after which she, with some of the nuns of that establishment, came to England, and was placed in the abbey of St. Leonard, at Stratford le Bowe; but quarrels arising between the foreign nuns and the original occupants of the nunnery, Mary, with her companions, repaired to Lillechurch or Higham in Kent, near Rochester, which Stephen founded before 1151, for nuns of the Benedictine order. Hasted, in his History of Kent, says, she was the first prioress of Higham, and that she retired thither with her nuns, “cum monialibus quas tanquam in proprietate sua recepit;” and he adds, that she afterwards became abbess of Romsey.

She appears to have presided over this institution until the year 1159 or 1160, when the death of her brother, William Count of Boulogne, which took place on his return from the siege of Tholouse, whither he had accompanied king Henry the

Second of England, invested her unexpectedly with his fair earldom and dominions.

Matthew of Alsace, youngest son of Theodoric d'Alsace, count of Flanders, incited with the prospect of obtaining so rich a bride, and urged on by the advice and encouragement of the king of England, who is said to have been determined on the match,* repaired immediately to this country, and succeeded in obtaining her hand, notwithstanding the strenuous opposition of Thomas à Becket, then chancellor of England, and the solemn nature of the monastic vows which she had taken. On the arrival of the married pair at Boulogne, they assumed possession of their territories, which they contrived to maintain, in defiance of the thunders of excommunication launched against them by the archbishop of Rheims and the bishop of Terrouenne—favors which count Matthew endeavoured to reciprocate, by forcibly ejecting the whole community of monks from the abbeys of Notre Dame and St. Wilmer.

In 1164 we find the count not unmindful of the kind offices of Thomas à Becket; for, having been

* *Life of Becket*, by the Baron de Pontchateau, p. 141.

informed by Henry II. that the archbishop had fled from England, and intended to pass through France, Matthew, who is said to have entertained the most deadly hatred towards him, took steps to arrest him immediately on his debarkation; but the prelate succeeded in escaping from the stratagems laid for his capture.*

In 1165, according to Oliver de Wrée, the count and his lady jointly witnessed a charter; and in 1168 they appear to have been again disturbed, by a person of the first rank and most powerfully supported. This was the princess Constance, sister of Louis le Jeune, king of France, who had been repudiated by Raymond V. count of Toulouse. Living in a retired state in Paris, and unable to maintain the dignity of her rank, she made application to pope Alexander III., and begged that he would cause the earldom of Boulogne to be restored to her, it having been, according to her statement, settled upon her as a dower by her first husband, Eustace, the eldest son of King Stephen, who died in the lifetime of his father. Though this claim must have been wholly without foundation, yet

* Matt. Westmonaster.

the pope warmly advocated her cause, and even wrote from Bénévent, where he was staying, to the bishops of Soissons, Amiens, and Leon, directing them to use every effort to induce Matthew and Mary of Romsey to surrender the earldom of Boulogne to that princess. "In case of refusal," said he, "renew the sentence of excommunication which has already been pronounced against them, on account of the unlawful marriage which they have contracted." In another letter, which he wrote to Henry, archbishop of Rheims, the brother of Constance, who had applied to him on behalf of his sister, he directs him "to neglect no means of compelling such as were present at the execution of the deed of settlement, to bear witness of its truth." Count Matthew of Alsace contrived, nevertheless, to baffle the effects of this new storm, and retained his possession of the earldom of Boulogne. His countess does not appear ever to have returned to the Abbey of Romsey under ecclesiastical censure, as has been generally supposed; on the contrary, touched with remorse for the infraction of her monastic vows, and acting in the true spirit of the times, she is said to have separated

from her husband about the year 1169 or 1170, and retired into the monastery of St. Austreberthe, at Montreuil, where she died, in 1180 or 1182, leaving behind her two daughters: Ida,* who succeeded her, and eventually married Reginald, count of Dammartin; and Maud, who was the wife of Henry I., duke of Brabant.

Matthew of Alsace is, by some authors, supposed to have afterwards married Alianor, daughter of Raoul or Radulfus, count of Vermandois, by whom he had a daughter, whose career is unknown. He seems to have been a bold and distinguished warrior, and is spoken of by Gilbert de Monte, as “ *miles admodum pulcher et probus, et donis largissimus.* ” According to Radulfus de Diceto, he died, knightlike, either at the siege of Driencourt, or very shortly after, having been mortally wounded by “ a certain marquis” on St. James’s day (25th July, 1173 or 1174), an event which that chronicler considers to have been visibly the act of divine vengeance; “ for,” says he, “ five years before, on the same festival, Matthew swore fidelity to the king whom he died fighting against (Henry II. of

* *Genealogie des Contes de Flandre*, page 223.

England), upon the holy reliques, and especially upon an arm of St. James, which was there present among them."

It is a curious circumstance, and favors the assumption of Mary never having returned to the monastery at Romsey, that few, if any, of the English chroniclers or monks who lived about her time, mention her having done so; while the French records seem to agree as to the fact of her remaining on the continent. Matthew Paris, who died 1259, is very explicit upon the subject of her marriage. He states it to have taken place in 1160, and that Thomas à Becket, who had been opposed to so illicit an union, had suffered much annoyance and encountered danger on account of it: his words are, "Eodem anno (1160) Maria Abbatissa de Rumesiae, filia Regis Stephani nupsit Matthæo Comiti Bononiæ, ex quo sustulit duas filias, propter quod peccatum Thomas Regis Cancellarius qui contrarius fuit huic contractui illico, ad instar Beati Johannis Baptisti multas passus est insidias." The *insidiae* here alluded to must have been the attempt made by Matthew to possess himself of the person of the archbishop, when,

years afterwards, he was flying from the resentment of his prince and benefactor; and had the papal power been exercised to the extent of forcing Mary back to the cloister, our good monk was too devout a lover of holy church not to have mentioned what must have been considered as a signal triumph over her enemies and detractors. Leland follows nearly in the same strain, and only differs in the date, “A.D. 1161, Maria Abbatissa de Rumesey filia Regis Stephani Matthiae Comiti Bononiæ nupsit, quibus nuptiis Thomas Becket Cancellarius Angliæ obstitit.” In the curious ancient notes to the Chronicle of Robert of Gloster it is stated, “In the vi. yer Matheu the Erle’s sone of Flaundres as yenst the vs of Christene Peple, wedded the Abbesse of Romesey in Engelond, with whiche he hadde the Erledom of Boloyn.” Sandford is the first English writer I have met with, who states that Mary, “having professed chastity, by the censure of the Church was separated from her husband, and remitted back into her monastery;” in this he quotes the chronicle of François de Belle Forest, published in 1573, a work comparatively modern, and not generally considered as being

exceedingly accurate. The fact of Mary having died in the Abbey at Montreuil, is recorded in the *Chronologie Historique des Contes de Boulougne*. It is mentioned also by Phillippe de l'Espinoy, viscounte de Therouanne, in his work entitled, *Recherches des Antiquitez et Noblesse de Flandre*, as well as in many other French antiquarian writings.

The history of Mary has been much dwelt on in these pages, inasmuch as, independently of the romance attached to her, she is almost the only abbess of whom any account is known to be extant. That her marriage was caused by political and interested considerations, scarcely admits of a doubt. Henry the Second, by advancing the suit of Matthew d'Alsace, hoped to gain a powerful continental friend and ally; while at the same time he may have intended to aim a blow at the power of that church, which, a few years afterwards, he showed so much inclination to reduce.

The dispensation of monastic vows in this instance would seem to have been no insuperable matter to accomplish: both precedent and authority for the marriage of such as had taken the veil, had

been afforded in the previous century, by Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, who, in a council held by him, A. D. 1075,* had established the fact that they were not irrevocable, by determining that such matrons and virgins as had become nuns in order to avoid insult from the Norman invaders, might be permitted to return to the world, and marry as they pleased.

The chancellor, Thomas à Becket, of course did his utmost to prevent the nuptials of so distinguished a person as the abbess of Romsey, rightly judging the example pernicious, and calculated to add yet greater obloquy upon the monastic system, which, as he well knew, and as we learn from the singular laws and enactments of that period respecting it, was far indeed from possessing that excellence and purity in which its founders had vainly hoped it might continue. In this he was zealously supported by Henry, archbishop of Rheims, who, while he poured forth the thunders of ecclesiastical wrath against the infraction of monastic discipline, did not forget, that while so doing he was advancing to the utmost the claims of his sister Constance

* *Concilia Magnæ Britanniae*, v. i. 363. Edit. Wilkins.

to the possessions of the count of Boulogne—a claim which, it may be observed, had a weak foundation indeed; else why not preferred in the lifetime of the late count William, her brother-in-law, who had been allowed to enjoy it without molestation, from the period of her husband Eustace's death, whose legitimate successor William most certainly was. And that the whole affair of Mary's marriage was not considered in any very heinous light, may be inferred from the act of the pope himself, who shortly afterwards legitimated the daughters of the abbess; and by so doing, as far as Constance was concerned, set the question of succession at rest for ever. Ida, the elder daughter, gave the title of earl of Boulogne to no less than four husbands, on whom she successively bestowed her hand.*

The next abbess was

Juliana,

who died in the month of February, 1199; and on the third of the nones of June following,

Matilda Walsane

had charge of the nunnery. This lady appears to

* Anderson's Royal Genealogy.

have been the sister of Walter Walrane, who married the great grand-daughter of William Longwood, Earl of Salisbury, in right of Ela his wife, the foundress of Lacock Abbey, Wilts. The date of her death is unknown: she was probably succeeded by

Matilda Paria,

respecting the date of whose election Willis is evidently in error. He states it to have taken place in 1219; whilst the letters patent, 47 Henry III., inform us that she died in the third year of that monarch's reign—“*tertio anno regni nostri obiit.*” As Henry III. succeeded his father, John, in 1216, it is more than probable that the date of election has been substituted erroneously for that of her death. After this abbess's decease, the privilege of trying and inflicting capital punishment on criminals taken within the liberties of the monastery, which had been granted to it by king Edgar, appears to have been neglected. From the date of her death up to the year 1262, when

Amicia

was at the head of the institution, nothing is known of the abbesses of Romsey, or of the monastery

itself, excepting that a vacancy must have taken place, as in the year 1261 the charge of the abbey was committed to William de Axmuth, during the royal pleasure—"vacante custode," there being no superior to regulate its discipline. This lady applied to Henry III. for restitution of the privilege of inflicting capital punishment, which had been lost during the session of her predecessors, and the gallows allowed to fall to the ground, which could not by any means be set up again without the express consent of royal authority; for there are still extant, "Literæ Regis Patentes dictæ," dated 47 Hen. III., which are to this effect:

"Rex omnibus etc. salutem. Quia accepimus per inquisitionem quam per dilectum et fidelem nostrum Nicolaum de Turri, et secios suos justiciaries nostros ultimè itinerantes in Comitatu Southampton fieri fecimus, quod Abbatissæ de Remeseye habuerunt furcas in manerie sue de Remeseye, et habere consueverunt à tempore Edgari, quondam Regis Angliæ, qui Abbaciam de Rumeseye fundavit, usque ad decessum Matil. Paric. quondam Abbatissæ de Remeseye, quæ anno tertio regni nostri ebiit, ut dicitur, ex concessione ipsius Regis

Edgari, et successorum suorum prædecessorum nostrorum regum Angliæ, illis usæ sunt, et quod post mortem ejusdem Matildis, furcis illis usæ non fuerint, et quod nullus postea fuit damnatus in eodem manerio, propter quod deciderunt furcæ predictæ, ita quod post modum, ausæ non furcunt furcas illas sine licentia nostra relevare. Nos, Amiciæ, nunc Abbatissæ de Romeseye, et monialibus ejusdem loci super hoc gratiam facere volentes specialem, concessimus illis quod furcas illas in manerio suo prædicto possint levare, et eis uti sicut eisdem temporibus dicti Regis Edgari, et successorum suorum progenitorum nostrorum Regum Angliæ usæ fuerunt. In cuius, etc.* Teste Rege apud Westmon. 22 die Augusti.”

To this Abbess the town is also indebted for the establishment of a fair, for which she obtained a charter in the fifty-sixth year of the reign of Henry III. In the eighth year of his successor, this abbess was summoned before the king's commissioners, to show cause why she inflicted and received fines of bread and ale, without the royal permission. She appeared by her attorney, and pleaded her

* Mon. Anglicanum.

right so to do by charter from the king's father, Henry III., which granted to her and her successors a free fair or market in the town, and, from the following record, it would appear that such claims were considered to be well founded:—

“ *Abbatissa de Romeseye summonita fuit ad ostend. Regi quo warranto capit emendas assisæ panis et cervisiæ fractæ in Romeseye, quæ ad coronam pertinent, sine voluntate etc. et prædecess. Domini Regis, &c. Et Abbatissa, per attornatum suum, venit, et dicit quod ipsa habet liberum mercatum in eadem per chartam Henrici Regis, patris Domini Regis nunc, quæ testatur quod idem Dominus Henricus Rex concessit Abbatissæ de Romeseye et successoribus suis, liberum mercatum in eadem villa. Et dicit quod ratione illius mercati capit ipsa emendas assisæ panis et cervisiæ etc. Et ideo consen. est quod prædicta Abbatissa, etc.*”*

This abbess, who seems to have been a careful guardian of the nunnery, was not uninterrupted in the tranquil discharge of her pastoral duties, for she appears to have been much annoyed by the

* *Placita de qno warranto etc. Ex record. in domo capitulari apud Westmonaster, asservato.*

wild frolics of one William Schyrlock, a prebend of Romsey, who, according to some manuscripts preserved in the British Museum, (vol. ii. page 527.) led so wild and dissolute a life, and disturbed the nuns of Romsey to that degree, that the archbishop commanded the abbess not to suffer his admission even over the threshold of the convent, at the same time strictly forbidding the nuns having any communication with him at any time or in any place whatever. “*Mandatum Archiepiscopi Abbatissæ de Rumseye, directum contra Will. Schyrlock, prebendar: de Romeseya, per villam de Romeseya et alibi in honeste devagantem, ut nec claustrum nec ecclesiam dictæ abbatiæ intrare audeat, durante suspicione probabili contra ipsum. Et inhibitio monialibus ne cum dicto Will, colloquium in domo vel alibi habere præsumant.*

“*Datum in Castro nostro de Saltwode, 3 ide Augusti, 1286.*”

He seems to have been a sad fellow indeed, for the same collection contains, “*Consimile mandatum directum magistro Henrico officiali Wynton. contra Will. dictum Schyrlock, moniales de Romeseye,*

perturbantem, et vitam in honestam et dissolutam trahentem."

There is reason to suppose that

Alicia de Wyntreshull

was the immediate successor of Amicia. However carefully the interests and discipline of the nunnery may have been guarded and advanced by her predecessor, the abbey, during the rule of this lady, seems to have gained but little on the score of respectability; for we find that Henry Wode-locke, bishop of Winchester, having made an episcopal visitation to the Abbey of Romsey in 1310, deemed it necessary to issue the following injunction to the nuns: “ Item prohibemus, ne cubent in dormitorio *pueri masculi* cum monialibus, vel *fœmellæ*, nec per moniales ducantur in chorum, dum ibidem divinum officium celebraretur.” Indeed, there is every reason for supposing that this religious establishment was very lax in its discipline about this period, and that Alice of Wyntreshull was ill adapted to discharge the important duties of her station. She died, as reported by the ecclesiastics of that day, of a forced intoxication, here, probably poisoned, about 1315, in the eighth year

of the reign of Edward II. This catastrophe must have caused great scandal at the time, for there are letters patent from Edward II., directed to his Justices, Henry le Scroop, John Daubernoun, and John Bluctt, directing them to search into the actual cause of death, and seek for and apprehend the malefactors who, unmindful of their own salvation and of the king's peace, had, by their vile machinations caused the death of the abbess of Romsey.

“ De inquirendo de morte Abbatissæ de Romeseye,
Pat. 8. Edw. II. N. 10.

“ Rex dilectis et fidelibus suis Henrico le Scroop,
Johanni Daubernoun, et Johanni Bluet, salutem.
Sciatis quod assignavimus vos et duos vestrum,
quorum vos præfate Henrice unum esse volumus,
justiciarios nostros ad inquirendum per sacramen-
tum, etc. qui malefactores, et pacis nostræ pertur-
batores, propriæque salutis suæ immemores mortem
Aliciæ de Wyntreshull nuper Abbatissæ de Rome-
seye machinantes, ipsam Aliciam apud Romeseye,
quæ est in confinio comitat. prædictorum nequiter
intoxicarunt, quo casu, qualiter, et quomodo, et ad

eujus vel ad quorum procurationem intoxieatio illa facta fuit; et quis vel qui dictos malefaetores postmodum scienter reeceptavit vel receptaverunt, et de omnibus aliis articulis et circumstantiis mortem illam qualitercumque contingentibus, etc. audiend. etc. In eujus, etc. Teste Rege apud Westmonaster. vicesimo octavo die Maij. Per ipsum regem."

Alicia Walerand

took charge of the nunnery about the year 1290: she was nobly descended, being the daughter of Wm. Walerand, who married Isabella, daughter and co-heiress of Hugh de Kilpec, lord of Kilpee, in the county of Hereford. Her brother, Robert Walerand, was sheriff of Gloster in the 30th, 32d, 34th, and 35th of Henry III.: he was also lord of Kilpee, and possessed of the manor of Spursholt, in Hampshire. In 1842, a curious silver seal which had belonged to the abbess's mother, Isabella, was found at Ewshot in Hampshire; it represented a lady with a hawk on her wrist and a lure in her right hand; with the legend S. Isabelle Walerant. The next abbess on record is

Clementia de Guilford.

During the superintendence of this lady, and in the seventh year of the reign of king Edward II., sir John le Rous, of the county of Wilts, released the abbess and convent of Romsey for ever from the right which he possessed, of presenting two novices to be veiled, who, with their attendant, were to be provided for out of the revenues of the abbey. He also resigned, in favor of the monastery, all right and claim whatever, possessed by him in certain estates which had originally been bestowed by his ancestors on the abbey, for the due support of the aforesaid nuns. A copy of the curious deed of release, which was signed at Romsey, on Sunday, the feast of the Nativity of the blessed Virgin Mary, (8th Sept.) A. D. 1314, is preserved in Madox' *Formulare Anglicanum*, page 385. On the 1st of June, 1333,

Sibil Carbones

died, abbess of this nunnery; and on the 25th of June following, her successor,

Joane Icche (or Iache),

was elected. She had been the Celeraria, or nun acting as butler to the convent. In the register of

John Stratford, bishop of Winchester, is a list of the nuns who were present at her election, amounting to one hundred in number, which corroborates the statement of Peter de Langtoft, quoted at page 10, respecting the extent of this establishment. Among the nuns who saluted her as their abbess and superior, was the sub-prioress,

Johanna Gervas or Tervas,

who, about the year 1349, appears to have been elevated to the same dignified position. There is, in the nave, a broken gravestone, mentioned in page 44 of this little work, which no doubt commemorated either this abbess or her immediate predecessor. It is a grey stone, and on it might a few years back be traced the faint outline of a female having a dog at her feet, under a cross which lies above her. Round the edge are the remains of an inscription, much mutilated. The letters are of the uncial character, which by some is called the Lombardic: in the Parliament Rolls, published by the Record Commissioners, they are denominated Modern Gothic. As much of the legend as may be traced is transcribed on the following page:

ANNA. C. M. R. S. B. A. D. S. I. P. S. V. A.
J O H A N N A . D R E S S A !

J O H A N N A

Abbatissa

de Rumeseye

Cir: 1349.

ANNA. C. M. R. S. B. A. D. S. I. P. S. V. A.
J O H A N N A . D R E S S A !

Some friendly hand has caused to be cut, in the centre of the slab, the inscription represented

above:—a praiseworthy deed! Would that there were more among us than there are, willing and anxious to rescue from oblivion the records of the past! As epitaphs of the fourteenth century, whether written in Latin or in Norman French, were very generally composed of lines which were made to rhyme at their terminations, it is probable that the original inscription was nearly as follows:

[Abbatissa] Johanna hic jacet humata
Ipseius animæ Christus det præmi [a grata].

Isabellæ de Camays

was elected 1352, and was succeeded by

Lucy Everard

in 1396.

Felicia Aas

had charge of the nunnery about 1417. This lady, according to an old register quoted in the life of William of Wickham by bishop Lowth, was second cousin to that munificent prelate, during whose lifetime she lived a nun in the Abbey of Romsey. In the Arundel Register she is called Ays; and a clause in Wickham's will says, "I also leave to Felicia Aas, a nun of the same monastery (Romsey), five pounds; and to each of the other nuns, thirteen

shillings and fourpence.” It may be inferred that on her account he was particularly beneficent to the sisterhood; for he also left five marks to the abbess, and remitted a debt of forty pounds, on condition that the same should be applied to the repairs of the Conventual Church and the Cloister. There is in the same work a *Tabula Genealogica*, in which she is spoken of as Felicia, first nun, afterwards abbess of Romsey.—“ Felicia monialis postea Abbatissa de Romeseye.” A licence for a fresh election was granted on account of her death, 25th October, 1419, in the seventh year of the reign of Henry the Fifth.

John Briggs

was elected, 1462; and, in 1472,

Elizabeth Brooke.

There is another abbess of the same name, who is stated to have succeeded in 1478, but they were most probably one and the same person; as, according to the best authorities, Elizabeth Brooke had the temporalities of the monastery restored to her on the 22d June, 1473. The next abbess was

Gundela, or Joyce Rowe or Rons.

Browne Willis dates her reception of the temporalities on the 9th of October, 1516; but this does not agree with the date of a visitation made by bishop Fox in 1506, when this abbess was accused of frequent and immoderate habits of intemperance and drinking, especially at late hours of the night; and inducing the nuns, by her bad example and exhortations, to revel in her chamber every evening; to the hindrance of God's worship and the defilement of their own souls.

Elizabeth Ryprose

was the last abbess of Romsey: she was elected on the 16th Dec. 1523, and surrendered the convent into the hands of Henry VIII. in 1539, when all religious establishments of this kind were finally abolished in England. At the period of her election this nunnery must either have lost the high character it once possessed, or else the light of Wickliff—cherished and maintained by the exertions of Luther and Calvin—had so broken down the ancient veil of popish superstition, that the public mind no longer regarded it with the reverence which it used to do; for we find, that at the election of abbess Ryprose there were only in at-

tendance twenty-three nuns, named as belonging to the establishment—a fearful falling-off from the numbers it once possessed, and an inference to us, who live in modern times, that the English people of the sixteenth century witnessed without regret the utter decadence of the monastic system among them. But the abbesses were not the only females of rank and distinction who resided within the sacred precincts of the foundation of Edward the Elder: the noble and the rich were glad that their children should be sheltered within the solemn aisles of this church; nor were the daughters of kings wanting among her “honourable women.” Almost all the earlier abbesses were women of royal or elevated birth; and, as we read, so highly celebrated for sanctity, that the monastery of Romsey was considered, from a very early period, as one of the best establishments for the education and culture of the female mind. This fact renders the paucity of matter respecting its general history a source of considerable surprise: one would have thought that those cunning chroniclers, the monks, might have left us some account of the fair dames who once were its inhabitants, and not have set an

example of neglect, which posterity has but too closely followed, as respects the beautiful church which is now the subject of our consideration. I believe myself to be correct in saying, that Romsey Abbey and its history have never been made the subject of particular description. Dr. Latham, it is true, has discussed a few capitals in the *Archæologia*; and there is, in the library of Mr. Britton, a fine proof of the talent of Mr. Buckler, who has drawn almost every portion of the venerable building in a truly admirable manner.—But this is somewhat of a digression.

With regard to the distinguished females who have been educated at Romsey, we may enumerate two: Christina, cousin to St. Edward the Confessor, who, in 1086, took the veil here. The Saxon Chronicle says, “*Beah into mynþpe to Rumeſ-ege*” [cessit in monasterium apud Rumeſey—she went into the monastery of Romsey]: and old Leland, in his *Collectanea*, (vol. i. 416.) tells us the same—“*Christina facta est monialis apud Rumesey.*” Nor is this the only place in which she is so mentioned by that venerable author; for in vol. ii., page 109, of the same work,

are these words:—“ *Virgo Christina soror Edgar. Clitonis, monasterium quod Rumesey vocatur intravit, fitque virgo vestialis.*” The same lady is also mentioned by Robert of Gloster, in his truly curious and antiquated lines:

Edgar Athelyng

(That rygt eyr* was of Engelond and kundet† to be kyng)
Made his yonge suster, as God gef‡ that cas,
Nunne of the hous of Romeseye, Christyne hyre name was.

She continued a nun until her death and was intrusted with the education of the second female of whom we will speak, Matilda, daughter of Malcolm and Margaret, king and queen of Scotland, who afterwards married Henry I. William of Malmsbury, (l. v. 92.) speaking “ *de Henrico Primo,*” says, “ *Uxor regis ex antiqua et illustri regum stirpe descendit Matildis, filia Regis Scotorum, à teneris annis inter sanctimoniales apud Wiltoniam et Rumesiam educata, literis quaque fæmineum pectus exercuit.*” She afterwards retired into the abbey of St. Mary, at Winchester, but without making any monastic vow. What her reason for so doing might have been, can only

* Heir.

† Acknowledged.

‡ Gave or ordained.

be inferred from the difficulty her father had in inducing her to accept the hand of the king of England. It was no doubt her wish to remain single; but the policy of the day pointing out the advantages of such an union, she consented, and was married by St. Anselm, in the presence of her father. She is mentioned by Robert of Gloster as “Molde, the gode quene;” and Peter de Langtoft speaks highly of her beauty and virtues:

“Malde hight that mayden, many nf her spak,
Fair scho was, thei saiden, and gode withouteo lak.”

He is also very circumstantial respecting her wedding, and the day it took place:

“Henry wedded dame Molde, that kyng was and sire,
Saynt Auselme men tolde cnrouned him and hire.
The corounyng of Henry and nf Malde that may,*
At London was solemnly on St. Martyn's day.”†

She was crowned in great state at Westminster; and, dying in the nineteenth year of her husband's reign, was buried at Winchester. It is of her and her virtues that the venerable Camden has preserved the following tetrastichon:

* Maiden.

† 11 Nov. N.S.

“ **Prospera non lætam fecere, nec aspera tristem,**
Aspera risus ei, prospera terror erant.
Non decor effecit fragilem, non sceptra superbam
Sola potens humilis, sola pudica decens.”

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE ESTATES AND POSSESSIONS BELONGING TO THE ABBEY, AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING THERETO.

THAT the monastery of Romsey was, at a very early period, considered of great importance, may be inferred from the revenues it possessed, as recorded in those documents which form the most perfect relics known to be extant respecting that ancient pile. It was valued at the time of the Conqueror's survey, at £148 10s. per annum—a considerable sum, if we consider the difference in the value of money in those days: and at the general dissolution of religious houses, was rated (26 Henry VIII.) at £528 8s. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.—its net income amounting to £393 10s. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.—In 1086, when Doomsday-book was compiled, the abbess and convent were owners of the whole town: “Abbatia de Romesey tenet totam villam in qua sedet ipsa ecclesia.” They possessed no less than eighteen carucates of land there, of which two

carucates were in demesne, and upwards of five hundred acres of meadow land. The rectory also belonged to the nunnery; and it appears by the minister's accounts of the abbey of Romsey, (32 Henry VIII., preserved in the Augmentation Office, at Westminster,) that he paid to the vicar of the parish church of St. Lawrence, in Romsey, a composition in recompense of forty shillings yearly, paid to him by the late abbess and convent of the monastery of Romsey, for bread, wine, and wax, found for the said church by ancient composition between the said late abbess and convent, and the predecessors of the said vicar. The nuns of Romsey were not only possessed of mills, lands, fisheries, etc., in the immediate vicinity of their abbey, but had sources of revenue at Eling, Nursling, Luzborough, Woodley, and other places. They had estates also out of the county; for we read in Doomsday-book, that “*ecclesia sanctæ Mariæ Romesiensis tenet Edendone;*” and this is confirmed by Leland, who, in his *Itinerarium*, (vol. iv. 25.) tells us, “*Hedinton, in Wilts, of ancient tyme was a prebend longging to Rumesey, an Abbaye of Nunnes in Hampshire.*” In an

“ *Inquir. de quod damnum*,” dated 24th of Edward III., we find that John of Edington gave the abbess of Romsey two messuages and certain lands at that place:—“ *Johannes de Edington dedit Abbatissæ de Romeseye duo messuag: et quasdam terras in Edyngdon com. Wilts.*” There is also a similar instrument, dated 9th of Edward III., commemorating the gift of six messuages and certain lands, by Emma, wife of Nicholas de Braishfield, for the support of a chaplain to perform divine service in the aforesaid abbey:—“ *Emma, qui fuit uxor Nich. de Braishfield, dedit Abbatissæ de Romsey sex messuagia et certas terras in Romsey, ad inveniend. unum Capellatum in abbatia prædicta ad celebrand. divina.*” And in the 24th of Edward III., Roger Haywood gave six messuages and some acres of land to the abbess:—“ *Rogerus Haywode dedit Abbatissæ de Romesey sex messuag et quasdam acras de terræ ibidem.*” They had, also, a wood at Northwood in Hampshire, the possession of which was confirmed to them by Edward I. in the eighth year of his reign. In the seventh year of king John, the nuns had a grant of lands and common of pasture in Tidolveshede; and in the

tenth year of Edward II. the church of Itchenstoke was appropriated to this nunnery. The abbess and convent also obtained charters of free-warren at Romsey, Ashton, and Edington in Wiltshire; these were granted in the 43d, 44th, and 45th years of Edward III. Their various privileges were confirmed to them in the 25th year of Henry VI., as appears by a Patent Roll of that date. They were also possessed of lands, etc. in Gloucestershire. Sir Robert Atkins, in his history of that county, says, that the abbey of Romsey possessed lands in the parish of Coats, in the 36th of Henry VI., and had the advowson of a chapel in that place: he further adds, that the tithes of Torlton, in the parish of Rodmarton, and a chapel late belonging to Romsey nunnery, had been granted to Giles Pool, in the 34th year of Henry VIII.

Among other interesting matter connected with the abbey in the curious accounts of Henry Warner, the king's bailiff, (32 Henry VIII.) mention is made of a charitable foundation here by king Edgar, for seven old and infirm men and thirteen old and infirm women, each of whom received a yearly alms of twenty shillings, at the feast of St. Michael

the archangel. The same document also records the names of several persons, formerly servants of the monastery, who were in receipt of fees, pensions, or annuities, by virtue of grants and letters patent of the abbess and convent; by which it appears that John Wintershull, chief steward, was in the yearly receipt of one hundred shillings for his life, given under the common seal of the abbey, on the 20th August, in the 13th year of Henry VIII., and that he was allowed four yards of broad cloth for a livery, or in lieu thereof, twenty shillings. His under-stewards or clerks, Peter Westbrooke and Alex. Curtop, had also yearly stipends of £11 10s. 4d. together with four yards of broad woollen-cloth for their liveries, or in lieu thereof, sixteen shillings and eightpence, and eight shillings for the liveries of their servants, with ten pounds to cover the expenses of a chamber, fuel, candles, eating, drinking, stabling for their horses, and hay and provender for the same. Thomas and John Foster, receivers of all the lordships, manors, lands, etc. were in like manner possessed of a hundred shillings a year, with an allowance of sixteen shillings and eightpence for their liveries, and for

those of their two servants twenty shillings, and £13 6s. 8d. to cover the expenses of chamber, fuel, etc. as previously described. John Foster appears to have been alive, and in receipt of his pension in the 2d and 3d of Philip and Mary, as was also John Foster, M.A., to whom the abbess and convent had, by their letters patent, dated 1st Sept. 1536, granted an annuity of £24 6s. 8d. There are several other names of persons in the enjoyment of small pensions, whose occupations are not described, to be found both in sir Henry Ellis's splendid edition of the *Monasticon Anglicanum*, and the curious document from which the greater portion of this chapter is derived.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE ABBATIAL BUILDINGS—THE TOWN MILLS, THE ANCIENT PARISH CHURCH OF ST. LAWRENCE, AND OTHER MATTERS.

So completely has the destructive power of time been seconded by the hand of man, that scarcely any of the ancient domestic buildings of the abbey of Romsey are now visible in their original state; what few remain having been completely metamorphosed into apparently modern erections.* There is, in the entrance to the precincts, a very fine depressed arch still remaining, which formerly belonged to the gatehouse, over which was a chamber called the clerk's chamber, originally allotted to the clerk or priest who officiated at mass, the confessional, etc. in the adjoining church: annexed thereto was the lodging of the receivers of the rents and general revenue of the monastery. The building inhabited by the nuns themselves was called the "Abbey's lodging," and was, in

* For instance, the residence of Mr. Jenvey and adjoining houses.

length, from the west end to the chapel of St. Peter at the end of the said mansion, 51 feet: there were also, independently of the said chapel, a kitchen, granary, stable, barns, etc., together with a garden, and a piece of land called Paradise. The abbess and convent let the town mills by indenture, dated 6th February, in the twenty-fourth year of the reign of king Henry VIII., to John King; and the good dames seem to have been well advised as to the careful preservation of their substance; for it was especially stipulated that “ John King should grind or cause to be ground all the grain, as well wheat as malt, to be expended within the monastery, without taking any toll therefore, when and as often as need shall require; and he shall repair and maintain all manner of repairs pertaining to the same house, viz. in dawbyn, thatching, ringing, and cogging, and all manner of other repairs belonging to the said mill at his own proper cost,” etc. They were also possessed of other water and fulling-mills, and the various fisheries are very particularly mentioned in their agreements. I have not been able to ascertain accurately the situation of the ancient parish church of Rom-

sey, but a lease has been lately shown to me of a certain portion of land, called the "Belfry-ground," which was let to the late Mr. George Doswell. It lies to the northward of the nunnery church, and was no doubt the site of the parochial edifice, such buildings being generally placed on the northern side of monasteries and cathedrals, the southern portions of which were occupied with chapter-houses, cloisters, domestic buildings, etc. There is, however, no certainty on this head, as the ground mentioned may have been occupied by the campanile, or bell-tower of the nunnery, which was frequently a detached building, as may be proved by their existence at Chichester, Rochester, and other cathedral churches. The church, wherever it stood, was dedicated to St. Lawrence. William of Wickham, in his will, bequeathed twenty marks to it:—" Item lego Fabricæ Ecclesiæ Parochialis ibidem (Romsey) viginti marcas." It appears to have been, as the great church is at present, only a vicarage—the great tithes belonging to the monastery. The vicar received an allowance of forty shillings yearly from the abbess and convent, for bread, wine, and wax, found for the parish

church by ancient composition between them. A certain annual pension was also paid out of the said parish church to the bishop of Winchester, as well as allowances to the archdeacon of that city, for procurations and synodals.

It is probable that, among the domestic buildings of the town of Romsey, many relics of the olden time are yet to be met with. The Falcon Inn, in Church-street, is one of them; and it is only recently that modern convenience has sacrificed therein a fine old English hall, the chestnut groinings of which, springing from corbel-heads beautifully carved and gilt, may yet be seen in a lumber-loft. This hall has not been destroyed, but, by means of flooring and partitions, made to consist of several apartments.

Of the ancient and former inhabitants of the town little is known. The Chronicle* of William de Rishanger, who was a Benedictine monk of St. Alban's Abbey and historiographer to king Henry III., mentions Cicely de Romesey, who having repaired to the tomb of Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, which had obtained considerable

* Lately published by the Camden Society.

reputation on account of the miracles performed at it, was immediately cured of an affection of the head, with which she had been afflicted for upwards of six months; and in the Issue-Roll of Thomas de Brantingham, bishop of Exeter and lord high treasurer of England, in 1370, mention is made of John de Romesey, valet of the king's chamber, to whom the king had, by his letters patent, granted £20 per annum, for the good service rendered by him to the same lord the king (Edw. III). There is also on the same roll, Patricke de Romeseye, esquire of the Scottish king, who received a gift of £30 from Edw. III. for the expenses of himself and attendants, while travelling from Scotland to London; but whether the above-mentioned persons had any connection with the town, would be no easy matter to determine.

Of those of later date and known to have belonged to the place, we may mention, firstly, the celebrated sir William Petty, ancestor of the present marquis of Lansdown, who was born here 1623, and buried in the south-eastern aisle of the church, in 1683. He was an eminent physician, and wrote on mathematics, politics, arithmetic, and miscellaneous sub-

jeets. The next person to be noticed is Giles Jacob, esq., who was born in this town, A.D. 1686. Notwithstanding his position in the Dunciad of Alexander Pope, his Law Dictionary should be on the shelf of every lover of antiquarian research. He died in 1744.

Among other miscellaneous matter which may have either escaped the foregoing pages, or occurred to notice since they were in type, we may mention, that in 1792 the six ancient bells of the church, weighing, in the gross, 81 ewt. 3 qrs. 21 lbs., were sold to Mr. Mears of Whitechapel, for the sum of £360 10s. 6d.; and the present peal of eight, which weigh 101 cwt. 2 qrs. 8 lbs., were put up at a cost to the parish of £673 14s. 10d.; the positive outlay, allowing for the deduction of the old bells, being £313 4s. 4d.;—a transaction, supposing the bells to have belonged to the nunnery, much to be deplored by all who have the true love of antiquity at heart.

The diligent searcher will find amid the slabs which compose the pavement, fragments of the ancient altar-stones: they may be easily distinguished, by containing small crosses on them,

about two inches long. When perfect they were of an oblong shape, and marked with five crosses, in memory of the five wounds inflicted on the person of our blessed Redeemer.

A curious article of jewellery was found here in September, 1839, by Mr. Jenvey, the church-warden, while superintending the repairs of the roof at the west end of the nave. It consists of a cross, about one inch in length, composed of garnets set in gold, with about three inches of gold chain attached: the back of this relic is enamelled. The interior of the tower, which rises from the intersection of the cross, is very fine, and affords a beautiful specimen of the Norman arcade:—the splendid effect produced by carrying up the ancient painted wooden ceiling, is the result of recent and most judicious alterations.

In the former edition of this work much was said of the sad debasements to which the abbey had been subjected—of the masses of whitewash with which its walls had been disfigured, and the general bad taste which but too plainly showed itself in various internal arrangements. Those objections, however, no longer exist. The exertions

of the late Honorable and Reverend the Vicar, aided by the co-operation of the Churchwardens and by liberal subscriptions, have succeeded in restoring the venerable edifice to something of its former splendour;—the walls have been entirely cleared of whitewash, and an unsightly gallery and curtain, and two enclosures and huge doors, which obscured the view of the building, have been entirely removed. Masses of ancient masonry, which had been cut away to make room for some modern monstrosity, have been made good. In the triforium of the nave great alterations and additions have been made, with the strictest regard to architectural truth. Transepts have been repaired, and some triforium arches therein restored to view; and it is no more than justice to those by whom these changes have been effected to state, that the result of their labors far surpasses the most sanguine expectations.

Of the ancient seats or seiges one relic only is believed to be extant; it consists of a stall, within which may still be perceived the quadrantal recess that permitted the rise and fall of the “miserere,”*

* Ecclesiastics were allowed, as an indulgence, to support

or shelving-stool, which the seat of the stall formed, when turned up in its proper position. This relic, formerly in the possession of the late Mr. Young, who resided in the abbey precincts, was, a short time previously to his decease, restored by him to the venerable building of the furniture of which it once formed no unimportant portion. And here we will think of terminating our labors; for—with the exception of the fact of Henry VIII. having sold the present edifice to the parishioners for the sum of one hundred pounds, as proved by the deed of sale, which is yet in the possession of the churchwardens—there is scarcely anything left to describe, that might come within the limits of an essay. Little, indeed, would it advantage us to dilate on, or make inquiry after, the Roman silver coin, which Dr. Stukeley was informed had been found here; nor, perhaps, could we ascertain truly whether Edward the Elder, his son Alfred, and daughter Eadburga, were really interred in the church, as the annotator to the venerable Camden would fain have us believe.

themselves on the miserere, in a position half sitting, half standing, and leaning on their elbows, during portions of their long services. There are fine specimens of the miserere at Winchester College Chapel.

CHAPTER IX.

REMARKS.—CONCLUSION.

GENTLE READER, our sketch draws nigh unto its close. We have kept company together in the consideration of our subject, from its earliest probable period. The varied architecture of this magnificent Abbey has been, at least, attempted to be impartially estimated; and we may, I think, reasonably hope, that we shall be considered to have borne ourselves as good knights and true, towards those holy dames who once waved the pastoral staff over the less-elevated sisterhood. Here then, do we pause: but before taking leave of each other, let us indulge in a few reflections on the profession and character of the ancient occupiers of this and other religious houses.

It has been too much the practice (arising from a leaven which three hundred years have not been able to disperse,) to disavow any feelings of obligation or gratitude to the inhabitants of the cloister.

They have been stigmatised, indeed, “ as slothful, lost to the commonwealth, intemperate, stupid and without the *least* tincture of *useful* learning.”* That individual instances of moral degradation may have frequently occurred, no man can possibly deny; but yet we must remember, that the *impartial* view of the monastic character has been obscured by the myrmidons of a remorseless and cruel tyrant; and moreover, that the worse, because more hypocritical era of puritanical cant had too powerful an influence over the minds of its deluded votaries, to permit them to allow one jot of praise to the unfortunate monk. However sternly-protestant his creed, no man of education ever contemplated the ruins of a monastic edifice, or walked amid the columns of a yet existing conventional building, without feeling deeply impressed with a sense of lively gratitude for the means adopted for the preservation of learning and the fine arts, during the darker ages. What do we not owe Ingulphus and the venerable Bede! shall Robert of Gloucester be held unworthy of our respect? or even Capgrave,

* Gilpin’s Observations on the Western Parts of England, pages 138, 139.

that sworn propagator of monastic fiction, deemed wholly incredible? Are we to imagine the Norman knight dashing to the tourney with an inkhorn hanging in the rest, as well as his lance? If we are not so to do, to whom shall we ascribe the Saxon Chronicles and many other works, some of which were destroyed when the fine libraries of the abbeys were scattered and annihilated? What shall we say, too, of the Williams, monks respectively of Newbury and Malmsbury, of Roger de Hoveden, and the Benedictine friar Matthew of Westminster? Shall that most extraordinary genius, Matthew Paris, who professed painting, poetry, mathematics, architecture, eloquence, theology, and history, and acquired reputation in each, or Wilikind, the German friar, who wrote the history of the Western Emperors, be condemned as having uselessly employed their time? No! to the labors of the cloister we owe much—perhaps everything—connected with literature and the fine arts. Mark the storied pane, rich in color and blazing in its glory; we derive it from Benedict, a monk. Gaze with admiration on the cathedrals of Salisbury, Winchester, and York; and, however

you may differ in religious creed, pay a just tribute of reverence to the memories of such master-minds as those of William of Wickham, John de Thoresby, and Robert Poore. Let us, then, be just: however reprehensible the monastic system may be, to it we are deeply indebted as the nurse and preserver of learning and science. I know no better way of proving this fact, than by requesting thee, friendly Reader, to take from thy book-shelf Hume or Rapin, the greater, indeed, the entire portions of whose early histories are derived from, and *solely rest* on, the *useless* learning of the calumniated monk.

But to conclude: the Abbey of Romsey, whether considered externally or with respect to its internal construction, is an object highly deserving the most minute study and attention; and within its walls may the antiquary and the meditator pass many a delightful hour, in the indulgence of those exquisite though ideal reveries, which can only be prejudicial when not properly restrained. He who paces the sacred aisle of an ancient abbey, may think of the ages which have flown away, of the many who have trodden the solemn spot before

him; and as he looks upon the transient shadows which the various projections of the building cast on the garish sunbeams on the floor, he may fancy them as marking the rapid passage of Time, rushing towards Eternity; and while he dwells on the existence of the stately friar or abbess, who, centuries back, have probably regarded them in the same manner, his mind, looking to futurity, may depict the contemplator yet unborn, gazing with a like emotion, and imagining the existence of similar feelings in a bosom which ages shall have consigned to oblivion and nothingness. Such are the sensations with which most regard our ancient temples: there seems to be a halo of sanctity around them, dispersing itself over all who are near. And though the days are passed when gentle blood was known by gallant deeds, and the lance of the warrior no longer glitters in the moonbeam, neither is the bugle-horn heard sounding in the valley, yet may the pilgrim of modern times, as the bell of Romsey Abbey bursts upon his ear, on any of those heights whence first he gets a view of its venerable tower, be forgiven, if in the romance of a moment he imagines the

ancient knight, striking the gallant steed with his spurs, and, as he makes “demi volte” in air, apostrophising the tutelary saints of the holy building towards which he approaches—“*Sancta Maria! Sancta Merwenne! Sancta Elfleda! orate, orate pro nobis.*”

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